# RIMUALDO:

OR,

# *THE CASTLE OF BADAJOS.*

A ROMANCE.

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

*LONDON:*

Printed by A. Strahan, Printers-Street,

FOR T. N. LONGMAN AND O. REES, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1800.

# RIMUALDO.

## CHAP. I.

I love you more than love can wield the matter
Dearer than eye ſight, ſpace, and liberty;
Beyond what can be valu'd rich or rare:
No leſs than life with grace, health, beauty, honour;
As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor, and ſpeech unable;
Beyond all manner of ſo much I love you.

——Blood will have blood:
Stones have been known to move, and trees to ſpeak;
Augurs, that underſtood relations, have
By maggot-pyes, and choughs, and rooks brought forth,
The ſecret'ſt man of blood. What's the night?
——Almoſt at odds with morning, which is which.

SHAKSPEAR.

THE ſounds advanced, and the converſation of the ſtrangers became every moment more intelligible. Rimualdo

 frequently

frequently heard the title of Marques pronounced with peculiar emphasis.

Two persons presently appeared, winding along the path; and as they approached the cell, the Condè recognised in one the figure of Sebastiano or the monk Benito; but the person of his companion was altogether unknown to him. He appeared rather advanced in years; upon his head he wore a brown cap, from which a black tufted plumage hung pendant on one side, almost as low as the shoulder; his cloak was long, and of a dark colour; a stiletto was tucked into his girdle; and his right arm supported a long rapier. The stranger's complexion was swarthy, and his beard and whiskers particularly full grown.

As the radiance of the moon beamed full upon the path, the Condè was enabled to observe minutely the genera

contou

contour of his face, which bore every characteriſtic mark of internal ferocity. Nor did the figure of Sebaſtiano paſs unnoticed; he was of the ordinary ſtature, and, from what Rimualdo could obſerve of his perſon through the monkiſh robes that enveloped him, he appeared ſtoutly formed and vigorous of limb, though his features were meagre and overſpread with a pale and ghaſtly hue; his eyes were large, but deeply buried in their ſockets, which gave his general aſpect a moſt forbidding appearance. Sebaſtiano ſupported on his right arm a ſmall wicker baſket, while the left entwined that of his companion.

On arriving at the mouth of the cave, the monk entered for a few moments, after which he again joined his companion, who waited his return without

the cell. The unknown immediately addreſſed Benito as follows:

" I tell you once more, notwithſtand-
" ing all that you may think or allege
" to the contrary, it is the Marques's
" firm belief, though I myſelf confeſs
" it appears almoſt incredible."

" I cannot think it poſſible," anſwered Sebaſtiano, " however this night, you
" ſay"——

" Yes," replied the other, " and every
" thing is already prepared above for
" their arrival."

" Do you then entertain no doubts
" as to the practicability of the ſcheme,"
reſumed the monk.

" None; the Marques cannot fail of
" ſucceſs; and a more fortunate circum-
" ſtance than the preſent could not have
" taken

"taken place to aid his deſign, which "nothing can impede."

"But in caſe of reſiſtance."

"Why then, you now, death muſt "terminate the affair."

Rimualdo ſhuddered as he heard theſe words, while the other continued:

"But reſiſtance, I tell you, is im- "poſſible; how can one unprotected "perſon reſiſt the united force of ſix "armed bravos: depend on it the bu- "ſineſs will be ſoon terminated, and by "times this morning we ſhall have "ocular demonſtration of the fact."

"Know ye," ſaid the monk, "when "the Marques intends to put his deter- "mination in practice, with regard to "Conſtanza: my ſituation becomes irk- "ſome to me—I wiſh he would relin-

" quiſh the affair, and leave the whole
" to my management."

Sebaſtiano's concluding words were uttered in a tone of the bittereſt malignancy.

" Be patient," returned the ſtranger;
" you cannot ſurely be diſſatisfied; re-
" wards have been moſt plentifully
" ſhowered on both of us; what would
" you then require?"

" Why do you aſk me the queſtion,
" Mendo?" cried the monk peeviſhly;
" you know that I have ever acted as
" the Marques's faithful friend; and
" being ſuch, I would arouſe him leaſt
" he ſleep too long"——

The name of Mendo, which had been juſt uttered by Sebaſtiano, inſtantly ſtruck the Condè; for he recollected that the peaſant, on making mention of the

the few domeſtics that then reſided in the Caſtilio di Badajos, particularly named the ſteward, whom he diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of "*ſurly Mendo*;" nor did Rimualdo doubt, from his appearance, but this was the very perſon alluded to.

"Why, what ſhould you fear from "the Marques's delay," replied Mendo in anſwer to the monk's laſt words.

"There is everything to fear in the "preſent ſtate of the caſe; there could "be nothing if he would but adhere to "my counſels."

"Nay, tell me then, Sebaſtiano, have "you any real cauſe of uneaſineſs?"

"Yes, I have; ſomething has of "late occurred," replied the monk in a ſurly tone; then pauſing awhile, he thus continued: "You are not unac- "quainted with the ſport which has for

" these two days past taken place within
" the forest."

" Well, why should that give you
" any cause of apprehension; three days
" is the allotted term for the continua-
" tion of the hunt; to-morrow once
" over, the King and court will again
" return to Toledo."

" True, Mendo; but trivial circum-
" stances oftimes produce the most un-
" foreseen events; yester eve, as the
" peasants were assembled before the
" entrance of my cell, a young noble-
" man, of the King's suite, rode nearly
" up to the cave; what his motive could
" be for wandering thus far from the
" chase, I know not: however, he
" made an immediate halt, and re-
" mained in the same spot till I, as usual
" arose to bestow my benediction on
" the idiot churls before me; I saw him
" start at beholding my features; but
" paid no attention to this circumstance,
" and

" and retired, ſecreting myſelf in
" the diſtant avenue of my cell;
" thence I noticed the youth's motions.
" The peaſants having quitted the en-
" trance of the cave, moved towards
" the village, during which period the
" young horſeman ſeemed totally ab-
" ſorbed in thought; when ſuddenly
" raiſing his eyes, he for an inſtant
" looked around him, then ſpurring
" his courſer, proceeded in the ſame
" track which the villagers had taken.
" I immediately iſſued from my hiding
" place, and quitting the cell, proceeded
" to an eminence that commands a
" view of the winding path for a con-
" ſiderable way; from this I ſaw the
" Cavaliero overtake the labourer Fran-
" ceſco, with whom he apparently en-
" tered into immediate converſation.

" Ere our meeting at the Caſtilio this
" evening, I went by duſk to the vil-

" lage, and pretending over fatigue, in-
" treated an hour's reſt in that peaſant's
" cottage. Franceſco conceived my
" preſence the greateſt bleſſing that
" could befall him; and having liſtened
" for ſome time to his unmeaning con-
" verſation, I brought up the ſubject
" of the youth that had addreſſed him
" the preceding evening. When I
" learnt, to my aſtoniſhment, that he
" had made particular inquiries con-
" cerning me; and on the peaſant's call-
" ing me by the ſanctified title of Benito,
" the youth told him that he was miſ-
" taken, for that my name was Sebaſ-
" tiano. Franceſco, from his own ac-
" count, ſpoke in the higheſt terms of
" my ſaint-like qualifications, and con-
" cluded with relating the tale of my
" being an aërial ſpirit, from the ſoft
" hymns that were nightly heard to iſſue
" from the cave.——Curſes on her
" who

"who has given riſe to the report: but "this mummery muſt end; I have too "long indulged the whining Conſtanza; "and ſince my ſafety is concerned, the "readieſt method ſhall be put in prac- "tice, if the Marques longer delays "the conſummation of his purpoſe."

"If ſo," replied Mendo, "there is "indeed cauſe for ſuſpicion; you will "not ſuffer this event to remain ſe- "cret."

"No, on my ſoul, it ſhall immedi- "ately unto the Marques; and by our "meeting to-morrow night I ſhall "have prepared a letter for his peruſal "which muſt be diſpatched forthwith "to Toledo; ſo for the preſent, Mendo, "fare thee well."

"Good night, Sebaſtiano, and a "quiet repoſe."

"Ah! Mendo," replied the monk in haſte, while his countenance underwent an immediate change; "when "ſhall we ever reſt in peace: by "heavens, my friend, as I nightly "quit my wretched pallet, after vainly "attempting to compoſe myſelf to ſleep, "I ſee Conſtanza ſmiling in her dreams; "I gnaſh my teeth in bitterneſs of ſoul, "and could exterminate the angel form "that thus ſeems to ridicule my mental "agonies."

Mendo, with a ſtifled groan exclaimed, "The paſt, Sebaſtiano, can never be re-"called; and ſince we have begun, "it were folly now to heſitate. We "muſt ſtifle all obtruſive thoughts, "(for heaven knows they prey on me "alſo,) and look forward with daring "confidence to the future."

Without uttering a ſyllable, Sebaſtiano inclined his ſteps to the cell; while Mendo,

Mendo, with folded arms, ſlowly entered the gloom of the wood, and immediately diſappeared.

Rimualdo ſtood thunderſtruck at the conference he had juſt been witneſs to, and after ſome minutes paſſed in deep thought, he cautiouſly ſtole from the place of his concealment, and gained in ſafety the ruined chapel. Having mounted his horſe, he, without further delay, took the road to Placentia.

From the myſterious converſation which Rimualdo had heard, he immediately drew ſeveral inferences. He now became fully convinced that Sebaſtiano was the real name of the monk, and Benito but an aſſumed title:—that Mendo, the Marques's ſteward, and the monk, were both ſervile creatures of that nobleman, and had been mutually employed in the perpetration of ſome dark deed of horror; this was fully demon-

ſtrated

ſtrated by their parting words. The Condè alſo underſtood that Conſtanza was the name of the lovely female he had ſo lately beheld with rapture; and that a freſh ſcheme of villany was on the eve of execution againſt ſome unprotected object.

Scarcely had the Condè brought theſe ſeveral circumſtances to mind, when the fair form of Conſtanza ruſhed full upon his fancy; with rapturous delight he ſtill continued to gaze intellectually upon the exquiſite ſymmetry of her perſon; he again recalled thoſe ſad complaining lines that had ſo powerfully wrought on his feelings, and the melodious ſoftneſs of her delicate voice ſtill ſeemed to fade upon the night breeze.

The thrilling pleaſure that now agitated the Condè's ſoul was ſuch as had never been before entered there. It was that divine glow, that exquiſite emotion

emotion of our ſpiritual eſſence, that is the immediate attribute of the Moſt High.

Rimualdo might be deemed a child of nature; for he poſſeſſed the quinteſſence of every feeling that ſprings from the ſoul, and does honor to humanity. He knew not the ill effects that accrue from yielding to the ardent tranſport that fired his ſoul: he therefore gave himſelf unreſiſtingly to the glorious enthuſiaſm; and nouriſhed love within his boſom, unconſcious that it had entered there. No longer did the length or drearineſs of the route appear to him an object of conſideration: he was altogether a new-created being; he had not even ennumerated the beauties of his adored Conſtanza, when he gained in ſafety the walls of Placentia.

On his couch he indulged a luxury of thought; and the little ſleep he enjoyed ſtill

ſtill preſented to his entranced brain the loved object of his waking ideas. Conſtanza was now the heavenly viſion that unceaſingly flitted before his fancy.

Morning at length irradiated the eaſt; the Condè aroſe, and repaired to the chaſe; but he was no longer conſcious of the marked attentions that were offered him by the noblemen of the higheſt rank, that courted his friendſhip and eſteem; even the converſation of his Sovereign, which was frequently addreſſed to himſelf in particular, paſſed unheeded.

Such is the mighty power of love, ſuch the emporium it holds over the human ſoul!

The chaſe being ended, Rimualdo unwillingly returned to Placentia. This ſtep he was compelled to take, as the King would have otherwiſe noticed his abſence, which might have perhaps ex-

cited his ſurprize, and led him to make ſome inquiries as to the motive that inſtigated ſuch conduct. But no ſooner was the Condè freed from his attendance on the Spaniſh Monarch, than he took horſe again without delay, and with the utmoſt ſpeed proceeded towards the chapel in the foreſt.

During the whole of the day no ſecondary idea had entered his brain; his whole thoughts had dwelt on Conſtanza: and how powerful muſt have been the flame that raged within his breaſt, when no recollection of fatherly admonition aroſe to damp his tranſport? The pride of the Marques de Lara, and the threatened curſe that awaited him, ſhould he form an attachment unworthy himſelf and family, had not once recurred to his thoughts. He never heeded the obſtacles which might be thrown in his way by the Marques di Badajos;

nor for a moment weighed in his mind the various ſituations in which Conſtanza might be involved.

The youthful Condè eaſily perſuaded himſelf that it was a mere curioſity and intereſt in the fate of the beautiful female that prompted this ſecond viſit to the cell; while the internal workings of his boſom indicated, but too evidently, that his conduct was actuated by far different motives.

He gained the ruins ſoon after eleven. Reaſon, as on the preceding night, no longer ſwayed his actions; for he was now the ſlave of love. The Condè immediately alighted, and quickly advanced towards the cave; having gained its entrance, he liſtened for ſome minutes, but the ſilence of death ſurrounded him; he entered the vault, and ſoftly gliding to the extremity, with ſome difficulty

difficulty difcovered a narrow paffage: again he paufed, but the fame ftillnefs reigned.

A dreadful idea at that moment rufhed on Rimualdo's mind. "Good "heavens!" did he internally exclaim; "fhould Conftanza be conveyed hence, "or fhould foul murder have termi-"nated at once her unmerited suffer-"ings!"

The thought was too dreadful; and the fickening Condè for fome moments fupported himfelf againft the fide of the avenue. Soon, however, recollecting his fituation, he moved forwards; when, after traverfing too abrupt windings of the paffage, he beheld at fome few paces before him the faint glimmering of a light.

Rimualdo advanced; his pulfe beat with redoubled palpitation: with careful ftep he foon gained the opening of the

the inner vault, when his enraptured eyes fixed on the lovely. object of his ſearch.

A lamp was ſuſpended to the oppoſite wall; under which hung a ſmall crucifix of ſilver; the back of Conſtanza's figure was turned towards the entrance of the cave where the Condè ſtood. He waited ſome moments to obſerve her motions. The form before him was habited in white garments, that trained upon the ground; a ſable ſcarf looſely twined her waiſt, and a black veil, fixed to her head, flowed gracefully o'er her ſhoulders.

She now advanced to the ſilver croſs, and apparently preſſed it to her lips; then made a retrograde ſtep, and reſumed the ſame ſituation ſhe had before occupied.

The Condè moved forwards; but the action did not alarm Conſtanza, who continued fixed in the ſame attitude.

Ah!

Ah! thought Rimualdo mentally; how intently ſhe is now occupied at her devotion!

Again he proceeded forwards, and ſoon dropped on his knee beſide her. The Condè's eager eye fixed on the ſuppoſed features of Conſtantia. Merciful powers! what horror at that inſtant ſtruck his ſoul! for, inſtead of the lovely features he expected to behold, a countenance meagre, bloodleſs, and o'erſpread with a livid hue, met his terrified gaze! The locks that hung on either ſhoulder were dripping with crimſon gore; a purple ſtream, as if juſt guſhing from a freſh-inflicted wound, faſt trickled o'er her fleſhleſs hands, beſmearing the pale robe that covered her boſom, and her deadened eyes, deep ſunk within their ſockets, were turned full upon the crucifix. Rimualdo ſhrunk enhorrored from the ſight; his joints were convulſed; the blood

blood ruſhed to his heart; and he ſunk to the earth, uttering an agonizing groan.

A ſcream iſſuing from a different part of the cell at that moment echoed through the vault: it arouſed the Condè, who turned towards the ſound; when, riſing from a pallet, he beheld the real form of the adored Conſtanza. He ventured to turn his eyes for an inſtant towards the crucifix, but the dreadful form was no longer viſible.

Conſtanza had quitted the rug, and was advancing towards the avenue with haſty ſtep; Rimualdo followed, and gently ſeizing Conſtanza's hand, exclaimed in an impaſſioned tone: "Lovely "excellence! fly not the object that "adores you."

Conſtanza endeavoured to withdraw her hand.

"Speak!

"Speak! oh, look upon me! let "me not incur your difpleafure! fay "that you pardon this bold intrufion."

With her face turned from Rimualdo, fhe ftill continued filent.

"On my knee, I intreat your for-"givenefs. Ah! look on me with a "pitying regard."

After a fhort paufe, Conftanza turned. Her features affumed a dignified air, that might have awed the moft daring libertine: it was a look that made the virtuous Condè fhrink, abafhed at his prefumption; and he inftantly relinquifhed the hand which he had, till that moment, preffed with fervor.

In a folemn tone of voice Conftanza thus addreffed him:

"Stranger, are the fentiments of your "bofom noble? or is it your pleafure

"to

" to embitter the ſolitude of a helpleſs " woman?"

" Heaven forefend!" replied the Condè in a tremulous voice; " in me " your gentle ſex ſhall ever find a pro- " tector; and you, of all, are moſt en- " titled to command reſpect."

" What then prompted you to inter- " rupt the ſilence of this ſpot, and " wherefore do you thus ſeek my deſ- " truction?"

" Merciful God! thy deſtruction!— " the blow that ſtrikes at thy peace " annihilates mine for ever! O judge " not ſo harſhly of me! Unperceived " I laſt night liſtened to yoū plaintive " ſtrain; I read the melancholy of your " ſoul; I pitied you; and a ſecret im- " pulſe has again urged me to this ſpot. " O Conſtanza! 'tis an emotion that " never, till now, glowed within my

" boſom;

" bosom; it tells me that my happiness,
" and life, depend on thee."

The Condè paused; his concluding words were uttered in a fervent yet faltering accent.

"On me!—Your life depend on a " forlorn wretch like me! Must ac" cumulated miseries then for ever prey " upon my soul? But tell me, stran" ger! how gained you the knowledge " of this my dwelling? and who in" formed you that I bore the appellation " of Constanza?"

" From a conversation of the monk " Sebastiano, which I overheard, I learnt " your name, revered."

" Sebastiano!" reiterated Constanza. " What monk is there, bearing that " title, who knows aught concerning " me."

"'Tis the ſame who inhabits this "cell, and is likewiſe known by the "title of Benito."

Conſtanza ſtarted from the Condè; then exclaimed, "What ſayeſt thou? "my father——"

Rimualdo, on hearing this exclamation, raiſed his hands in aſtoniſhment; he fixed his eyes upon Conſtanza's features; then cried, after a pauſe,— "Impoſſible! No; it cannot be, love-"lieſt of women! you are deceived; "ſome ſtrange myſtery involves your "fate; Benito can never be your pa-"rent."

An indignant frown glanced from Conſtanza's eyes; and, after ſilently obſerving the Condè awhile, ſhe replied: "Stranger, begone! nor longer dare "inſult my unprotected ſituation."

"Oh, agony of mind!" cried Rimualdo, ſtriking his forehead. "But I

" have merited this—I am preſumptu-
" ous, unworthy." Here he pauſed.
" Yet, O Conſtanza! hear me—liſten
" to what I can allege in extenuation of
" my fault."

" 'Tis not in my power, ſtranger, to
" grant your requeſt; for every moment
" I expect my parent's return—and
" ſhould he find you here, my life will
" be forfeited."

" Your life! merciful God! What
" hand could wound that angelic form?
" is there a wretch that would attempt
" a deed of ſuch atrocity?"

A thouſand conflicting paſſions now tore Rimualdo's ſoul.

" Wherefore do I heſitate?—I muſt,
" I muſt tear myſelf from you—'Tis
" Conſtanza's ſafety that requires my
" immediate flight.—Oh! cruel, hard
" fate—thus to be forced from the pre-
" ſence of that object, which the throb-
" bing of my heart now tells me will for

" ever hold dominion there!—Yet, ere " I go, accord me your forgiveneſs, for " this raſh ſtep! Yes, Conſtanza, regard " it as the action of a diſtracted, brain-" ſick mortal; of one, in whoſe palpi-" tating boſom glows the pureſt flame " that ever burnt on love's chaſte altar. " Yes, by the light of Heaven, whoſe " azure tinge your bright eyes reflect— " by the pale moon, whoſe ſober light " diſplays your virgin modeſty—by " everything that is ætherial, I ſwear " my ſoul adores you."

During this apoſtrophe, the boſom of Conſtanza had experienced a thrill that imperceptibly ſpread itſelf throughout her whole frame; in a ſoftened voice ſhe at length replied:

" Stranger! I beſeech you, curb this " ecſtacy of paſſion: learn hence-" forth to baniſh all further remem-" brance of a forlorn creature like me; " for

" for never muſt you again behold Con-
" ſtanza. Let reaſon aſſume the rein;
" yield to its ſober dictates. I muſt not
" liſten to your proteſtations, for they
" are vain: my future deſtiny is irre-
" vocably fixed."

The Condè ſtood motionleſs awhile; then exclaimed in an agonized voice:

" O God! is there no hope?"

He raiſed his hands, and, groaning, threw himſelf upon the earth; a ſtupor ſeized him; and he remained, during ſome minutes, totally deprived of ſenſe and motion: at length his eyes uncloſed; they fixed upon Conſtanza's form, who knelt beſide him: her lily hand preſſed one of his; her tender gaze was bent upon his countenance, which was moiſtened with her plenteous tears, and partly ſhaded with the flowing ringlets that

had eſcaped the bandeau, and hung negligently over her ſhoulder.

"Wretch that I am!" cried Rimualdo, at the ſame time ſeizing Conſtanza's hand; "why ſhould I thus "ſubject another to miſery? what right "had I to intrude on the ſolitude of a "ſtranger? even now my delay endan-"gers your future ſafety! Farewell then, "Conſtanza!" A heavy ſigh accompanied theſe words, which with difficulty found utterance. The Condè ſtill continued to claſp her hand; he raiſed it to his lips; and gently breathed on it a lover's tender kiſs. Her eyes were bent to earth, from which the big drops plenteouſly diſtilled; her boſom thròbbed with viſible emotion; and a ſtifled ſigh trembled on her roſeat lips.

Rimualdo moved from the cell; while Conſtanza unconſciouſly followed his ſteps,

ſteps. They paſſed the winding avenue, and traverſing the outward cave, ſoon gained its entrance. The moon beamed in full majeſty, and the expanded boſom of nature wore the moſt ſerene aſpect.

The Condè turned his head; Conſtanza's eyes were elevated to heaven; once more he ſeized her hand, then gently preſſed it to his boſom. Her tears flowed more plentifully; and ſhe raiſed her hand to conceal the powerful workings of her features.

Rimualdo at length relinquiſhed his hold, and in an impaſſioned voice exclaimed:

"Farewell, Conſtanza!"—

He pauſed; for his lips denied utterance to the fatal words *for ever.*

He inſtantly ruſhed from the cell; then ſtopped; for his ear was ſtruck with a faint ſound—it was Conſtanza, who

who, in a gentle tone, bade him a laſt adieu.

There was ſomething in her voice that again diſarmed his reſolution. He flew towards her; and on his knee paſſionately ſwore eternal fidelity and love.

Suddenly the Condè ſtarted from the path; the echo of advancing footſteps ſtruck his ear; and Conſtanza at the ſame moment gave a faint ſcream, and cried:

"Yes! it is my father!"—

She haſtily ſeized Rimualdo's wriſt, and, without uttering a ſyllable, hurried him towards a clift in a remote corner of the cave. In a faint voice, which evidently diſplayed the extreme perturbation of her ſoul, ſhe cautioned the Condè to remain there reconcealed till the monk Benito had paſſed the winding paſſage and gained the inmoſt receſs.

"Then,"

"Then," said she, "as you prize Con-"stanza's safety, instantly fly the cell, "and bury for ever all future remem-"brance of its sorrowing inhabitant."

She immediately vanished; and every thing around was involved in gloom and silence.

Ere long Sebastiano entered; the Condè heard his approaching step; now he proceeded up the avenue, when the sound became fainter, and gradually died on the ear.

Rimualdo stole cautiously from the cave, and soon gained the path; when, using the utmost celerity, he passed to the chapel; and, vaulting his horse, set off full speed for Placentia.

What unaccountable sensations for some time occupied the Condè's brain! Every idea was banished from his recollection which did not appertain to Constanza. Yes, she was divinely fair! her

boſom too was uncontaminated by vice! The fond Rimualdo even imagined that ſhe muſt be of noble extraction.

'Twas thus the youth pictured to himſelf a thouſand pleaſing viſionary chimeras; nor did he once recollect that ſhe might have fallen a ſacrifice to the vicious deſires of the Marques di Badajos, or that other inſurmountable obſtacles might for ever preclude a hope of his obtaining her.

Occupied with ſuch brain-engendered fantaſies, reaſon entirely loſt her ſeat; nor was it till he had regained his hotel that he experienced any degree of rationality.

'Twas then his mind's eye dwelt on the horrid viſion that had firſt ſtruck his ſight on entering the cell; ſo much did the dreadful recollection operate on his feelings, that he often gazed around his

his chamber in ſearch of the object, which his eyes nevertheleſs dreaded to behold.

Now the Condè recurred to the fervent proteſtations he had made to the unknown Conſtanza. He harboured no thought in the ſmalleſt degree detrimental to her honor: for he ſtill regarded her more as a heavenly than mortal being. But the remembrance of the Marques del Lara had now taken full poſſeſſion of his mind. A father's heavy curſe awaited him, ſhould he dare infringe the parental admonition: yet he had already diſobeyed. He had ſworn fidelity; he had pledged his honor to an unknown object; and he ſhuddered at the conſequences that might accrue, were the Marques, his father, made acquainted with the fact; for Rimualdo conceived himſelf bound to Conſtanza by every ſacred tie of honor: he believed her the ſpotleſs

child of virtue, and thought that ſhe muſt be of noble parents.

For two ſucceſſive nights the Condè had enjoyed but a ſmall portion of reſt; nature was at length exhauſted, and in the midſt of theſe meditations a heavy ſleep overpowered his ſenſes.

On awaking the enſuing morning, a drowſy ſtupor weighed upon his brain; his pulſe was irregular, and a hectic fever preyed on his whole frame.

Rimualdo's attendant at length appeared; he made the Condè acquainted with the neceſſity there was for his ſpeedy attendance on the King, who would ſoon be ready to recommence his journey back to Toledo. He equipped himſelf, almoſt unconſcious of what he did, and was quickly prepared to attend his Sovereign.

Rimualdo vainly attempted to take his uſual morning's repaſt; after which he

he repaired to the place of rendezvous, where all the ſuite had been long aſſembled. Soon after his arrival the Spaniſh Monarch appeared, who, followed by the nobility, took the route back to Toledo.

They journeyed at the ſame eaſy pace as before; and, without any material occurrence taking place, arrived at the city in ſafety by the cloſe of the ſecond day.

During the courſe of the route, no powerful ſenſation had aroſe to diſpel the ſtupifying veil that totally overpowered Rimualdo's ſenſes: but, on gaining Toledo, the idea of ſo ſoon beholding the youth Ceſario ſtrongly wrought upon his feelings.

He haſtened to fulfil thoſe duties about the King's perſon which his preſent ſituation required, and then proceeded to his hotel. He flew to the ſtudy;

ſtudy; where, on entering, he beheld Ceſario, who, with extended arms, joyfully aroſe to meet him.

The youth immediately perceived the alteration in the Condè's appearance, and made the moſt anxious inquiries concerning his health. Rimualdo evaded for ſome time the importunities of his friend: but the fever continuing to increaſe, accompanied with the moſt diſtracting pains in the head, he was under the neceſſity of retiring to his chamber at an early hour.

By Ceſario's entreaties a phyſician was ſummoned, who adminiſtered the proper medicines. Their efficacious effect was fully felt by the Condè, who on the following morning found his malady conſiderably abated.

Rimualdo at an early hour deſired Ceſario's attendance in his chamber. The youth, after teſtifying his extreme

joy

joy at the Condè's visible amendment, begged to relate a most extraordinry circumstance which had taken place during his absence.

The Condè desired that he would proceed; when Cesario made him acquainted with the fact.

" You may naturally conjecture, " Senor Condè, that being so accus- " tomed to your society, I felt an un- " pleasing void when you departed from " Toledo; and though the term of your " absence has been so short, yet it is " impossible for you to conceive how " much I have experienced your loss. " Study, it is true, afforded me amuse- " ment; yet I unceasingly felt how much " I needed your presence: for, if I " formed opinions on the subjects I " read, you was not with me to judge " how far those opinions were just, nor " correct any fallacious ideas I might have

"have imbibed. If I repaired to the "public promenade, you did not accom-"pany me to point out the varied "beauties of nature; and thus the en-"chanting landſcape that ſurrounded "me afforded a momentary gratifica-"tion, but no ſubſtantial pleaſure.

"'Twas on the evening of the fourth "day from your quitting the city, that "I, as uſual, left the hotel and proceeded "to the public walks on the banks of "the Tagus. The ſun was faſt declin-"ing, and threw on every object the "moſt delightful glow. A gay aſſem-"blage graced the promenade; nume-"rous barges floated on the ſtream; "and everything tended to remind me "of the pleaſure we had there experi-"enced together.

"I ſtrolled to the extremity of the "avenue, and entering the very bower "which we had occupied, gazed on the

"enchanting

" enchanting ſcene before me, which " gradually excited in my boſom ſen- " ſations of mingled delight and me- " lancholy: ſo much did I continue " immerſed in contemplation, that twi- " light ſpread around its obſcuring veil " ere I roſe to depart.

" On quitting the alcove I obſerved " that every one had retired from the " walks. With ſlow ſtep I moved along " the path, oft times pauſing to obſerve " the beautiful effect of the moon's " glittering beams that trembled on the " dark boſom of the deep. I was thus " occupied, when a confuſed ſound " ſeemed quickly advancing towards " me; ſurpriſed, I turned my head, when " my regard immediately fixed on ſe- " veral perſons maſked, who preſently " ſurrounded me; perceiving that their " intention was hoſtile, I unſheathed my " rapier, without heſitation, fully deter-

" mined to defend myſelf againſt their " attack. Perceiving my determina- " tion they alſo drew their ſwords, and " death threatened me on every ſide."

" I loudly demanded the cauſe of their " behaviour, and what was their inten- " tion, when a voice anſwered: 'Surren- " der yourſelf without further reſiſt- " ance, and you are ſafe; if not, your " life will pay the forfeit of your raſh- " neſs.' I ſtill continued on my guard, " but the bravos preſſed hard upon me, " and I found that I muſt either yield " or fall a victim to the united force op- " poſed againſt me.

" Suddenly a thought ſtruck me; " for the retrograde motion I had been " compelled to make, had by this time " forced me to the very brink of the " Tagus, I haſtily tore away the faſten- " ing of my cloak, the weight of which " would otherwiſe have impeded my

" purpoſe,

" purpofe, and held the robe extended
" at arms length; I relinquifhed my
" fword, when the bravos rufhed for-
" ward to feize my perfon; at that cri-
" tical moment I caft my garment
" amongft them; the fudden action
" made them paufe, when fpringing for-
" ward, I leaped into the ftream and
" foon fwam to the oppofite fhore,
" whence I proceeded hither by the moft
" public route; a ftep I deemed abfo-
" lutely neceffary, fearing a fecond af-
" fault. Since that evening I have
" twice quitted the hotel, cautioufly
" avoiding all unfrequented parts of
" the city, and always returning before
" dufk, though I each time obferved
" that fome unknown perfon followed
" my footfteps, yet no hoftile attempt
" has fince taken place."

The Condè was ftruck with aftonifh-
ment at receiving this extraordinary in-
formation; for Cefario had as yet formed
no

no connection in Toledo; and so little was he known, that he might be deemed a total stranger in the city; the rooted melancholy of his soul likewise precluded every idea of his being engaged in an amour; besides, Rimualdo was internally convinced that the youth concealed nothing from him. These several circumstances made the attempt on his person appear even more astonishing.

The Condè and his friend mutually endeavoured to assign some probable cause which might have instigated the daring assault; but their several suggestions were alike unsatisfactory; and they concluded by conjecturing that the attack was made by mistake, as it was not improbable that Cesario might strongly resemble some youth of the populous city of Toledo, whose person was really the object of the bravos' search.

Rimualdo then made his friend acquainted with the eminent danger to which the King had been expofed on the fecond day's hunt, and related alfo the ftep he had providentially taken to fave him; he likewife gave Cefario a full detail of each day's chafe, and of the myfterious conference he had overheard between the Marques di Badajos, and the monk Sebaftiano; but fuch were the unaccountable fenfations he experienced refpecting his love for Conftanza; that he concealed every occurrence which had taken place relating to his interview with her.

For the fpace of two days Rimualdo was confined to his chamber; but on the third he arofe free from bodily indifpofition, though his mind ftill continued a prey to love and all its attendant difquietudes; he became every moment more defirous of entrufting the fecret

to

to his friend, yet a certain degree of ſhame, if ſuch his feelings might be called, ſealed his lips on the ſubject.

On the morning of the fourth day after his return from Placentia, a meſſenger arrived from the kingdom of Navarre, bearing a packet from the Marques del Lara. As the Condè received it, his hand trembled with emotion; for he was conſcious that he had already infringed a parent's command. Never before had ſuch dread ſeized him; he endeavoured to conquer its powerful effects, but the attempt proved vain, and ſome time elapſed ere he ſummoned ſufficient fortitude to break open the ſeal.

During this period Ceſario's eyes were bent on Rimualdo's countenance, in which the agitation of his ſoul was viſibly depicted. His ſingular remiſneſs at times, and an unuſual melancholy that

weighed on his ſpirits, had not eſcaped the youth's obſervation, who conjectured that ſome hidden circumſtance muſt prey upon the Condè's ſpirits: he had ſometimes wiſhed to ſound Rimualdo on the ſubject, but had been conſtantly withheld, from a conviction that his ſituation did not allow him ſuch a freedom of conduct.

Rimualdo caſt his eyes on the letter, as if fearful of peruſing its contents; but he felt re aſſured, on finding that it began in the ſame ſtyle as uſual:

" *From the* MARQUES DEL LARA *to*
" SENOR DON RIMUALDO.

" I have much to communicate, dear
" ſon, but ſhall firſt acquaint you with
" the ſafe receipt of your letter, which
" was diſpatched to me ſhortly after
" your arrival at Toledo. I am highly
" pleaſed with your account of the jour-
" ney,

" ney, and more ſo at being made ac-
" quainted with your favourable recep-
" tion at court. But who is this youth
" Ceſario that you have taken into
" ſuch particular favor? Rimualdo, you
" are as yet inexperienced, and the
" world is full of deception; be there-
" fore cautious, and do not yield your-
" ſelf wholly to an unknown perſon; for
" though you are unacquainted with the
" fact, I now think it neceſſary to in-
" form you that certain friends of mine
" will narrowly watch your conduct, and
" faithfully make me acquainted with
" every occurrence that takes place. By
" this I do not mean to infer that any cir-
" cumſtance has yet come to my know-
" ledge which militates againſt you in
" the ſmalleſt degree; on the contrary,
" I feel proud in poſſeſſing ſuch a ſon;
" my intention is only to make you
" ever continue circumſpect in your
" actions.

" Since

" Since my quitting the court, much " has been told me reſpecting the Mar- " ques di Badajos; I have myſelf but " a ſlight knowledge of that noble- " man's character; for, during my ſtate " occupations, he reſided for the moſt " part at his family Caſtilio. Since my " ſeceſſion, he is become a moſt power- " ful favourite at court, and never quits " the King, with whom he has ſo far in- " ſinuated himſelf, that he now enjoys " his unrivalled confidence. To that " nobleman therefore you muſt aſſi- " duouſly pay your court, as by the " adoption of ſuch conduct you will " flatter his vanity, and inſure yourſelf " a moſt powerful advocate with your " Sovereign.

" The ſignal ſervice which you have " of late rendered the King is no ſecret " to me. I admire your courage and " applaud your zeal; even had your " life been forfeited in the attempt, my

" sorrow for your loss would have been " greatly alleviated by the remembrance " that you had forfeited it in attempting " to preserve that of so excellent a " Monarch.

" Improve then the lucky chance " which fortune has thrown in your way; " for, as I hear, the King so highly " esteems you, that he conceives no " reward adequate to the gallant con- " duct you have exerted.

" Now, last of all, my son, let me re- " peat my former injunction. Re- " member well that you are the only " lineal descendant of my house.—Re- " member also, that Spain boasts not a " more antient family than your own. " Let no splendour dazzle your inex- " perienced sight; for the richest heiress " in our dominions, if not the offspring " of a father whose race has been en- " nobled time immemorial, should

" possess

" possess no attractions for my son. " Let no fair face operate on your young " and susceptible heart, for the most " beautiful features will one day fade; " it is nobleness of blood that must alone " possess for you transcendant charms, " and to that alone you must devote " yourself.

" Yet think not, Rimualdo, that " riches and true nobility go always " hand in hand; no, my son, in lapse " of time, by unforeseen events, the " greatest will sometimes be reduced in " fortune; should you make choice of " any female from such a lineage, " poverty will not be the smallest de- " triment in my mind; no, the action " will redound more to your honour, " for thus a noble race sinking beneath " the pressure of indigence, will, through " your means, regain its wonted splen-

"dour, and I ſhall honour more the "diſintereſtedneſs of your conduct.

"But if, contrary to my ſanguine "expectation, you ſhould demean your-"ſelf by forming an unworthy connec-"tion; never, Rimualdo, expect my "forgiveneſs.—Never let my eyes again "behold the object that would be "odious to me: no; expect my hate—"my curſe—my ——. Yet hold, "why ſhould I threaten thus? Rimualdo "is my ſon, and incapable of baſe-"neſs; I know he will purſue the noble "track his anceſtors have ever con-"tinued to follow; and, like them, be "an honour to his country, the fa-"voured of his Sovereign, the admira-"tion of all, and the beloved of his "father,

"FERNANDEZ DEL LARA."

Had

Had the thunder's burning bolt fallen at Rimualdo's feet, it could not have operated more forcibly on his feelings than did the concluding part of his father's letter; he unconsciously perused it over and over, yet every time felt an augmentation of inward dread. It was now he became more desirous than ever to unburden the weight that lay upon his heart; Cesario was present, and who so capable of feeling for his situation.

When the conflict of his passions had in some degree abated, Rimualdo bade his friend approach him. There was an unusual solemnity in his manner that astonished the youth, who obeyed in silence.

For a while the Condè bent his regard on Cesario's features, who bore with calmness the scrutinizing look; such is the sure attendant of conscious integrity.

 "Yes,"

"Yes," said Rimualdo at length, "honour is indeed the characteristic "marking of that countenance:" he took Cesario's hand, still fixing his eyes upon him, and thus addressed him:

"I am on the point, my friend, of "confiding to you a secret that preys "upon my soul; I require no protesta-"tions on your part, for I believe your "honour unshaken; nor should I esteem "you worthy my confidence, if I were "not internally assured of your circum-"spection. It is therefore enough for "me to say that I require your secresy, "and that you in return make me a "verbal promise."

Rimualdo paused, when the youth pressing the Condè's hand between his, exclaimed:

"Yes, Senor Condè; I can be cir-"cumspect; and will be so; you are my "kind,

"kind, my noble benefactor, and may "command me even to the forfeiture "of life, which is for ever dedicate to "your service."

Rimualdo clasped Cesario to his bosom, after which he gave an ample description of the Marques his father; and then read to his friend the latter part of the epistle he had just received, which fully corroborated Rimualdo's account of the haughtiness of his disposition.

After this the Condè began a circumstantial detail of every event that had occurred to him at the cell of the monk Sebastiano; during that part of the recital which particularly appertained to Constanza, his emotions became so powerful, that frequent pauses interrupted the thread of his narration.

Rimualdo did not conceal the real ſtate of his heart, but confeſſed to Ceſario the violence of his love for the unknown female. The youth liſtened to this extraordinary recital with mingled ſenſations of pity, horror, and dread.

He felt moſt acutely for the lovely Conſtanza's ſituation, and the unhappy paſſion which had taken root in the Condè's breaſt; he experienced ſenſations of terror when he heard of the appalling viſion that had preſented itſelf to Rimualdo's terrified gāze, and he felt the greateſt diſquietude as he intellectually looked forward to the miſeries which were likely to accrue from his friend's unfortunate attachment.

In what deteſtation did Ceſario now behold the proud Marques di Badajos

and his ſervile dependants; he believed, with the Condè, that ſcenes of the moſt deteſted guilt were not unfamiliar to their minds; he attempted to account for Conſtanza's myſterious ſecretion in the cave with father Benito, whom he did not believe to be her parent. And had it not been for Rimualdo's exquiſite deſcription of the female, circumſtances might perhaps have led him to harbour thoughts detrimental to Conſtanza's honour.

As the friend of Don Rimualdo, it was Ceſario's duty to offer him all the conſolation and prudent advice which his ſituation required: but how difficult the taſk! The youth felt experimentally the impotence of all attempts in oppoſition to the mighty power of love, which now held entire dominion over the Condè's ſoul.

After ſympathizing with his friend, Ceſario at length ventured to adviſe him on the ſubject. He recurred to Conſtanza's words, by which ſhe had given him to underſtand that the future deſtiny of her life was fixed; he ſpoke much of the Marques di Badajos, who would to all appearance be an enemy moſt anxious to fruſtrate whatſoever deſigns he might attempt to put in practice; and laſtly, he dwelt on the threatened curſe which inevitably awaited him, ſhould he act in direct oppoſition to the command of the Marques.

Rimualdo liſtened attentively to the counſels of his friend, and though he fully allowed their juſtneſs, yet they proved inadequate to counteract the powerful paſſion that ſwayed his ſoul.

His anſwers to Ceſario did but merely expreſs thoſe chimerical opinions which

he had formed; for he persisted in affirming that Constanza must be of noble birth, and therefore worthy of his love; nor would he for an instant listen to any remonstrance that tended to vilify her character, which he ventured to affirm was spotless as the pure and harmless infant's: finally, he alleged that he was now in honour bound to Constanza, and that if he even relinquished all idea of making her his, he nevertheless conceived it a duty incumbent on him to watch over her safety, which he believed in imminent danger, from the vile machinations of the Marques di Badajos. Such were the plausible ideas formed by Rimualdo's love-sick fancy, to excuse his future proceedings with regard to Constanza. Cesario understood too well the dangerous situation of his friend; he felt that arguments would only act as a stimulus to his passion, for fate had cast

the die, and the Condè muſt abide the hazardous chance.

In the courſe of the day, a meſſenger came from the royal palace to inquire into the ſtate of Rimualdo's indiſpoſition; and at the ſame time make known the Spaniſh Monarch's deſire of ſeeing him at Court as ſoon as the amendment in his health would permit.

This flattering proof of the King's attachment fully determined the Condè to attend the levee the enſuing morning; and he ſpent the remainder of the day in converſing with his friend.

## CHAP. II.

Honour's a ſacred tie; the law of Kings;
The noble mind's diſtinguiſhing perfection;
That aids and ſtrengthens virtue, where it meets her,
And imitates her actions, where ſhe is not:
It is not to be ſported with. —— ADDISON.

When firſt I ſaw *him*,
I felt a pleaſing motion at my heart:
Short breathing ſighs heav'd in my panting breaſt;
The mounting blood fluſh'd in my glowing face,
And dy'd my cheeks with more than uſual bluſhes:
I thought him ſure the wonder of his kind;
And wiſh'd my fate had giv'n me ſuch a brother;
Yet knew not that I lov'd; but thought, that all,
Like me, beheld, and bleſs'd him for his excellence.
ROWE.

EVERYTHING being in readineſs, the Condè quitted his hotel and repaired to the palace.

A murmur of approbation echoed through every chamber as he paſſed; each

each countenance greeted him with complacent ſmiles; every tongue laviſhed compliments on the King's gallant preſerver. But the admiration of moſt of the ſofter ſex ſprang not from this cauſe; it was the exterior appearance of the Condè that operated powerfully on the youthful females preſent.

Nor is this circumſtance to be wondered at, for the paſſion that now glowed in Rimualdo's boſom had diffued o'er his features an inexpreſſible air of tenderneſs, and the ſlight indiſpoſition he had experienced had mellowed the manly glow which uſually ſat upon his open countenance. Love's luſtre beamed full from his penetrating eyes, and his general deportment was negligently elegant.

But, beſides theſe powerful attractions, the Condè was endowed with a ſoul abund-

abundantly rich in every noble qualification and mental accomplishment.

The King fully demonstrated the pleasure he felt at beholding him; and at his desire, Rimualdo kneeling was then invested with an honorable badge, conferred only upon such as had proved themselves deserving by meritorious actions.

"I have invested you one of this "order," said the Spanish Monarch, at the same time raising the Condè, "not because you have preserved "my life, but from an internal con-"viction that you possess a noble-"ness of soul which would prompt you "to succour even the meanest of my "subjects that was exposed to similar "danger. I know, Rimualdo, that it "was not the idea of saving your King, "that actuated your generous conduct:

 "no

"no—it was the diſintereſted impulſe "of ſuccouring a fellow creature, even "at the peril of your own life."

During ſome time the Condè attended the levee, his inquiring gaze was anxiouſly bent on every perſon in the numerous apartments through which he paſſed. It was the Marques di Badajos whom he ſought; but his eye vainly endeavoured to fix on the perſon of that nobleman.

By inquiries, Rimualdo at length underſtood that he had quitted Toledo the preceding evening. This was the very information he ſo much dreaded to be made acquainted with; for now he did not doubt but Sebaſtiano's letter had reached him; and that the Marques was then gone to put his plan reſpecting Conſtanza into immediate execution.

In the perturbation which this ſuppoſition inflicted on his mind, the Condè anſwered,

anſwered, in the moſt incoherent terms, many of the courtiers who addreſſed themſelves to him: and after making ſeveral inquiries as to the deſtination of the Marques's journey, without obtaining any ſatisfactory information, he quitted the palace, and quickly joined Ceſario at the hotel.

The youth immediately noticed the evident perturbation of his ſpirits, and inquired into the cauſe with the tendereſt ſolicitude. Rimualdo, without delay, made his friend acquainted with the agonizing conjectures which then agitated his mind; and concluded with acquainting Ceſario, that it was his intention to ſet out that very night for the foreſt.

The aſtoniſhed youth endeavoured to check this dangerous impetuoſity of temper: he brought forward every argument that reaſon could ſuggeſt; but

ſtill the Condè remained unalterably bent on purſuing the haſty dictates of his love-diſordered brain; and wearied, at length, with Ceſario's friendly attempts to check his deſign, he peeviſhly told him:

" That he did not require his attend-
" ance, if it were not perfectly agreeable;
" and that he did not doubt but his
" obſtinate perſeverance in attempting
" to draw him from his purpoſe ori-
" ginated from ſome ſelf-intereſted
" motive."

This illiberal ſuſpicion inflicted a pang to Ceſario's feeling heart: it was but momentary; for he generouſly recurred to the frenzied ſtate of Rimualdo's mind, and thus excuſed his unjuſt remark.

" No," exclaimed the youth, " Senor
" Rimualdo means not to taunt his friend;

" he

"he is no ſtranger to my feelings. It is "no ſelfiſh conſideration; but the fear of "that which may hereafter accrue to "himſelf that prompts me to urge theſe "truths, alike unpleaſing to both. How "joyfully will I alone repair to the foreſt, "and execute whatever my benefactor "may require; how little do I value "exiſtence, when put in competition "with the duties of friendſhip."

Theſe words produced an immediate effect on the Condè; he threw himſelf upon the boſom of his friend, to conceal the ſtarting tear and remorſeful bluſh that o'erſpread his viſage.

"Oh! ſay no more, my worthy Ceſa-"rio; wound not thus the feelings of thy "friend!" cried Rimualdo. "I know "your worth; I know your integrity: "look upon my actions with a com-"paſſionate eye; regard my words but "as proceding from the fool of love.

"Yes,

" Yes, I feel I am the total ſlave of that " headſtrong paſſion. It is not that " reaſon has quite loſt its emporium " o'er my mind. No: 'tis an internal " conviction of my folly, without the " power of oppoſing its dictates, that " maddens me more than love itſelf. " Therefore, Ceſario, in pity, I beſeech " you, no more attempt to curb my " paſſion; for you but waſte your words " upon the deſert air, and, by endeavour- " ing to counteract, ſtill kindle the flame " wherewith I am conſumed."

The youth would have replied, but Rimualdo haſtily interrupted him.

" Oh, my friend! ſpeak not in exte- " nuation of your conduct; I am too " fully convinced of the juſtneſs of your " arguments, and the friendly motives " which actuate your behaviour. 'Tis " I alone ſhould aſk excuſe, for I am " in fault; my words ſprang from a " haſty

"hafty paffion; they were not the "genuine dictates of my foul. Yes, "Cefario, I have wronged you, grofsly "wronged you; and it is the conviction "of my fault which now inflicts the "keeneft pang to my heart."

During the day, the Condè and his friend made every neceffary preparation for their departure that evening. To avoid obfervation, Rimualdo gave orders that the horfes fhould be conducted a mile without the city, as it was his determination to quit Toledo with his friend on foot.

At twilight they left the hotel, muffled in loofe, travelling cloaks, that fcreened them from obfervation. They foon paffed the gates of the city; after which they proceeded, quickening their pace, to the fpot where the horfes had been previoufly taken. Having mounted, they pufhed forward with the utmoft fpeed,

ſpeed, taking the neareſt route to Placentia.

Thus the Condè's violent love for the unknown female in the foreſt has been fully demonſtrated. It will now be neceſſary to explain the emotions with which Rimualdo had inſpired Conſtanza.

Accuſtomed to meet no other countenance than that of the forbidding monk Sebaſtiano, it is not to be wondered at, that Conſtanza ſhould feel gratiefid at beholding an object before her ſo perfect in every reſpect as the Condè. How much then was that pleaſure augmented, when the ſoft impreſſive accents flowed from his lips? What was the thrill her all-virtuous and gentle mind experienced at hearing this very object utter vows of eternal love, at beholding him proſtrate at her feet; his manners the moſt graceful; his words the moſt perſuaſive, and his whole

air

air every way calculated to charm even an indifferent beholder! It was enough to enſlave the affections: it won Conſtanza's ſpotleſs ſoul.

Prudence and duty ſtill operated on her mind, and urged her, however painful to her feelings, to adopt the ſtern conduct ſhe had exerted towards Rimualdo. But when ſhe witneſſed the effect that conduct produced—when ſhe ſaw the unaffected agonies of his ſoul pourtrayed in every feature—when Conſtanza beheld him ſtretched lifeleſs on the cold earth, all fortitude forſook her; ſhe gazed wildly on his faded countenance, ſhe bathed it with her warm tears; ſhe preſſed his dew-cold hand, and unconſciouſly breathed on it the moſt tender kiſſes.

All conquering love at that moment took refuge in her palpitating boſom: it was the moſt exquiſite of paſſions; for

for it was the offspring of pitying admiration.

It was this love, of which ſhe was wholly unconſcious, that prompted her to addreſs the Condè in a ſoftened tone of voice. It was love which led her to follow his ſteps from the cell, and ſigh forth an adieu; and it was love that inſpired her with reſolution to conduct Rimualdo to a ſafe retreat, at the ſound of father Benito's approach.

But what were Conſtanza's ſenſations during the night? No longer did ſhe, as formerly, enjoy the ſoothing balm of ſleep; nor did ſhe, during the day, paſs her hours in ſilent meditation. No, her breaſt had forfeited its uſual tranquility; it was now become the ſcene of conflicting paſſions; for, alas! ſhe well knew the future deſtination of her life, which would for ever ſeparate her from the object that now haunted her fancy.

Notwith-

Notwithſtanding her endeavours, ſhe could not baniſh the fond recollection of Rimualdo from her thoughts. Oh! how ardently ſhe wiſhed, yet at the ſame time feared, that her eyes would never again behold him.

By night, as was her cuſtom, ſhe wandered forth from the cave. She attempted her wonted ditty; but the quick palpitation of her boſom, and the tears that burſt forth involuntarily, impeded the completion of that melodious ſtrain. No longer did ſhe gaze upon the moon with rapturous enthuſiaſm, and offer up her ſilent prayer. Conſtanza's thoughts were bent on Rimualdo, and her tearful eyes ſought the ſpot where, kneeling, he had renewed his vows of eternal conſtancy and love.

Such were Conſtanza's ſenſations; they were indeed more ſilent, but not leſs painful than the Condè's. He was

fully conſcious of the conſuming flame that glowed within his boſom; and he was at liberty to indulge without reſtraint the violence of his paſſion. But Conſtanza was the child of nature and innocence; on the altar of her heart love had illumed his pureſt fire, yet ſhe knew not what love meant. How gladly would ſhe have confided her ſecret to the ſoul of ſome pitying mortal, capable of adminiſtering the advice and conſolation ſhe ſo much required.

But there was no ſuch friend to whom ſhe could unburden herſelf. The forbidding features of her myſterious parent Benito continually met her regard; his threatening aſpect chilled her ſoul. 'Twas then the full recollection of her approaching deſtiny ruſhed on her mind; ſhe ſhuddered leaſt Benito ſhould obſerve her perturbation; for, wholly untutored in deceit, Conſtanza would have related

related the occurrence of Rimualdo's visit to the cell, had Sebastiano for a moment questioned her as to the cause of her emotions, although from the knowledge of his repeated threats, she was internally convinced that that moment would, in all probability, prove fatal to her. Fortunately Benito's thoughts were so absorbed in gloomy meditations, that the alteration in Constanza's manners passed unheeded.

The Condè and Cesario journeyed forward during the night, without making any halt, and arrived at Placentia early the ensuing day. Here they merely stopped to take refreshment; after which they continued their route, and in the evening gained a straggling village on the skirts of the forest near the valley Vatuegas; whence the Condè might contemplate the strong Castilio di Badajos towering

on the lofty ſummit of a mountain, whoſe baſe was clothed with dark waving wood.

This ſecluded ſpot, and the ſhort diſtance it was from the monk Benito's cell, determined Rimualdo to make it the place of their halt; and they alighted at the only poſada which the village afforded. Having given neceſſary orders concerning their horſes, &c. they immediately proceeded towards the foreſt.

Gloomy night's ſpangled robe was ſpread wide o'er the face of heaven; but the ſilvery ſphere had not as yet ſhed her partial gleam around. The Condé and his friend entered the wood; whoſe tufted foliage obſcuring the faint influence of the ſtar-fretted roof, involved every object in total obſcurity.

Though Rimualdo had well obſerved the tract which conducted to the ruined chapel, he was wholly unconſcious in the

the preſent inſtance whether he proceeded in the right path or not; they however moved forward for a conſiderable time, when, ſuddenly, the well-remembered chime of the caſtle clock proclaimed the tenth hour.

From the diſtant ſound, the Condè became aſſured that he had miſtaken the path; he therefore retraced his footſteps, and then ſtriking off in a contrary direction, which he conjectured would conduct him to the deſired ſpot, quickened his pace, whilſt Ceſario proceeded in ſilence beſide him.

It was long ere they gained the chapel: both felt the effects of fatigue, owing to the expedition they had uſed in travelling ſuch a conſiderable length of ground, and the additional trouble they experienced in ſeeking the ruins.

It had not yet beat eleven; and the hour of twelve ſeemed the uſual time for

for Sebaſtiano's abſenting himſelf from the cell. Rimualdo and his friend, muffling themſelves in their ample cloaks, paſſed the mouldering porch, and ſeated themſelves on the remnant of a pillar, which had been formerly one of the ſupporters of the chapel's fretted roof.

Both remained for ſome time ſilent; but far different ideas occupied their minds: the Condè's thoughts being ſolely bent on the object of his fervent adoration, while Ceſario gave way to the painful recollection of his loſt love, and various other circumſtances that tended to fill him with a heart-thrilling ſadneſs.

At length the pale moon emerging from the dark ſheet of clouds which had hitherto veiled its modeſt luſtre, diffuſed a ſilvery gleam, which pierced through the ſhattered caſements and partly diſmantled roof of the chapel.

The

The ſolemn bird, that ſhuns day's gaudy light, now began his melancholy peal: the diſmal ſound, wafted on the mourning night-breeze, echoed through the long aiſles: now the thin-winged bat flitted ſwiftly to and fro, and the dull raven's death-note broke at intervals on the ear.

"How ſolemn is this ſcene!" ſaid Rimualdo to his friend; "how calculated "for the contemplative mind! It has "even in ſome meaſure diſſipated the "train of my ideas, and led me to think "of objects which were but now the "moſt foreign to my ſoul. It has "induced me to draw a compariſon "between the gay ſcenes which are now "paſſing in populous cities, and the "ſolemn ſtillneſs of this retired ſpot. "Folly inhabits the one, contemplation "dwells with the other: pride, power, "ſenſuality, tumult, and the fallacious "purſuit of worldly gratifications, mark "the

"the firſt; while meekneſs, content, "ſobriety, and tranquility are the "predominant characteriſtics of the "ſecond.

"Oh, Ceſario! how my ſoul delights "to move unſhackled in fancy's ætherial "plain! 'Tis then I form ideas of "things beyond this tranſitory ſtate of "exiſtence; 'tis then the exuberant "brain engenders conceptions, whoſe "very extravagance convince me of "man's ſuperiority, and the refinement "of his intellectual being. It convinces "me that this outward frame is but a "beautiful machine, wherein the ſoul "is meant to operate for a period; and "reaſon forms the chief part of that "divine eſſence; for, if once the worldly "paſſions ſo far predominate that we "loſe the power of ratiocination, the "divinity of man ceaſes to exiſt; that "ſpring which moves the beauteous

"fabric is rendered of none effect by a
"ſyſtem of ſenſual coercion, and we
"dwindle even below the brute crea-
"tion.

"It is the tremifaction or quick vi-
"bration of the nervous ſyſtem, which
"conſtitutes the exceſſive refinement
"of our moral exiſtence; we muſt be
"alike ſuſceptible of ſuperlative joy, or
"the moſt violent paroxyſm of grief to
"feel the real bleſſings of life. That
"being on whom nature has beſtowed
"the moſt exquiſite ſenſibility, feels,
"with equal poignancy, the effect of
"mental pleaſure and pain. But he in
"whoſe boſom ſuch delightful emo-
"tions are blunted, may be ſaid to paſs
"a life of dull monotony; he is inca-
"pable of every paſſion, he feels not
"the divine pleaſure of loving, and is
"therefore dead to every other godlike

" attribute which ſhould glow within
" the boſom of comprehenſive man."

Ceſario liſtened attentively to Rimualdo's words, which produced the moſt happy change in his ideas, for the remembrance of his loſt Maria had ſo ſtrongly recurred to his recollection, that the moſt gloomy thoughts of death began to operate on his mind, when the Condè had firſt addreſſed him. He now coincided in the opinions of his friend, and thus the time which would have otherwiſe appeared leaden-winged to the expecting lover, fled unheeded by Rimualdo, who was not leſs aſtoniſhed than his friend at hearing the caſtle clock toll the ſolemn hour of midnight.

They inſtantly roſe to quit the chapel, and advanced a few paces towards the portal, when they were ſuddenly ſtruck motionleſs with aſtoniſhment, for a

deadly gleam of light had momentarily illumined every ſurrounding object. Rimualdo and his companion both gazed around, but nothing was viſible; every object had reſumed its former aſpect, and no ſound broke upon the awful ſilence, ſave the appalling cries of the ſcreech owl, which were now repeated in quick ſucceſſion.

Without being able to aſſign any juſtifiable cauſe, the Condè and Ceſario both experienced the moſt ſtrange ſenſations of horror; each was aſhamed of his own puſillanimity, and endeavoured to conceal his feelings from the other.

"Come," ſaid Rimualdo, at length, "why are we thus panic ſtruck? let us "advance without delay."

Ceſario at that inſtant caught the arm of his friend, and addreſſed him in a low voice:

" Lift, lift, Senor Condè; a hollow
" echo which seemed to proceed from
" approaching footsteps, broke but now
" upon my ear."

Both remained silent, when presently the sound was repeated, Rimualdo directed his regard towards that part of the ruins from which the noise had issued, when his eye caught a glimpse of a female gliding along the side aisle of the chapel.

" It is, it must be Constanza," exclaimed Rimualdo impetuously rushing forward towards the object which had so forcibly struck him. Cesario, after a moment's pause, pursued his steps. As the Condè advanced, he gradually slackened his pace, and thus the youth soon followed at a trifling distance.

Rimualdo suddenly staggered back some paces: the attention of his friend being

being wholly directed towards him, he noticed this retrograde motion, and just flew in time to receive the falling Condè in his arms.

"Good heavens, Senor!" exclaimed Cesario, "are you indisposed?"

"Look, look, my friend," cried the Condè in a convulsed tone of voice, "it is there again."

Cesario for a moment cast his eyes around, but the female had fled, and no other object was visible. After raising Rimualdo, he remained fixed to the spot for some time in a seeming state of stupefaction. The astonished Cesario frequently addressed him, but received no answer to his eager inquiries: at length the Condè gave a heavy sigh, and pressing the hand of his friend advanced in silence to the portal of the chapel.

The

The youth conceiving that ſome moſt unaccountable event muſt have cauſed Rimualdo's extraordinary conduct, thought it moſt expedient to leave the explanation to himſelf; he therefore walked beſide his friend without addreſſing him any further on the ſubject.

As they gained the threſhold of the ruined porch, Rimualdo, with evident marks of fear, pauſed and turned his gaze upon the interior of the chapel. It was but a momentary glance, for he inſtantly darted forward, and with a precipitate ſtep, proceeded along the path that conducted to Benito's cell.

They had now nearly gained the ſpot, when Ceſario perceived a gleam of light radiate from the mouth of the cave; this circumſtance did not eſcape Rimualdo's obſervation, and they advanced with more caution, under the dark co-

vert

vert of the trees that ſhaded the oppoſite ſide of the path.

Having gained a ſituation fronting the cavity, they beheld three figures at the further extremity of the cell, who preſently moved forward with the ſeeming intent of quitting the cave; in theſe perſons Rimualdo ſoon recogniſed the Marques di Badajos, the Monk Sebaſtiano, and the ſteward Mendo, bearing a lamp in his hand. Having nearly gained the verge of the cell the Marques ſtopped, and placed his hand on his forehead in the act of deep meditation: after continuing for a ſhort period in this poſition, he took the light from Mendo, and then motioned them both to retire; they bowed in ſilence, immediately obeying his will, though the viſage of the monk was clouded with a gloomy frown.

The

The Marques, in great agitation, then drew a folded paper from his boſom; he opened it in haſte, and as his eyes ran over the contents, his hand viſibly trembled, and the upraiſed light gleaming full upon his features betrayed the frequent changes of his countenance. Sometimes a dark frown lowered over his brow, his clenched teeth were viſible, and a horrid gleam ſhot from his ſtarting eyes; ſuddenly his whole aſpect would undergo a change, the hectic fluſh would quit his furrowed cheeks, which aſſumed death's pale livery, and the ague fit of fear ſeized every joint. After a while the Marques refolded the paper, then ſlowly traverſed the cell ſeveral times with an unſteady ſtep.

At length beckoning his attendants, Mendo approached and took the light from the hand of the Marques, who then drew a ſeal from his girdle, while

Sebaſtiano was employed in heating wax over the flame of the lamp. The Marques again unfolding the paper, affixed his ſeal at the bottom, and then delivered the ſcroll into the Monk's hand, uttering theſe words with emphaſis: "That "you will find fully ſufficient; and now, "unſhackled, you will be free to take "your courſe." Sebaſtiano giving a ſmile of malignant ſatisfaction, retired forthwith into the interior of the cave, while the Marquis with folded arms and thoughtful pace advanced into the foreſt, followed by his ſteward Mendo.

The Condè and his friend kept their ſtation till near the ſecond hour of morning when, finding no ſigns of Sebaſtiano's quitting the cell, they were compelled to retrace their ſteps to the village.

Not a ſyllable eſcaped Rimualdo's lips till his arrival at the poſada, but on entering

tering his chamber he addreſſed Ceſario as follows:

" My taciturnity muſt have greatly
" aſtoniſhed you, my friend; yet, believe
" me, it did not originate in any frivo-
" lous circumſtance; on the contrary
" I have been, and ſtill continue, under
" the chilling impulſe of fear; for oh,
" Ceſario, conceive my ſituation, when
" inſtead of beholding the adored Con-
" ſtanza, in the female that met our re-
" gard in the chapel my ſight was again
" enhorrored with the appearance of the
" ghaſtly viſion which had ſo appalled
" me in the monk Sebaſtiano's cavern.
" The ſame thin cadaverous counte-
" nance, the ſame fixed luſterleſs eyes,
" and the ſame blood-dripping garment
" covered her meagre frame; but this
" was not all—Oh God! my friend, the
" recollection even now inſpires ſenſa-
" tions that chill my very ſoul—it was
" not the firſt emotion of terror at be-

" holding this ſpectre that cauſed my
" retrograde ſtep, it was the ſight that
" followed. For a moment, Ceſario, place
" yourſelf in my ſituation; the robe
" that ſhrowded her figure, as if wafted
" by the breeze, ſuddenly diſplayed the
" form beneath, when lo, I beheld a
" ſkeleton, whoſe bones were covered
" with a pale film; in that ſpot where
" once the heart had motion, faintly
" flitted a lambent flame, of bluiſh caſt,
" that ſhed a faint ſickly gleam through-
" out the hollow bony frame; my emo-
" tions at that inſtant I cannot deſcribe,
" nor will language inſpire you with an
" adequate idea of the ghaſtly form be-
" fore me. The ſight was too much;
" my knees trembled; I cloſed my
" eyes, and, but for your timely
" aſſiſtance ſhould have remained in
" all probability ſtretched on the pave-
" ment even till the preſent moment.
" Some dreadful deed muſt have been

" perpetrated near that ſpot; I would, " but cannot, obliterate the thought of " Sebaſtiano's having been in ſome " meaſure concerned; or why ſhould " this appalling viſion haunt his dwell- " ing; however, the hand of Omnipo- " tence ſeems outſtretched; and ſhould " I be the object choſen to unravel the " fatal myſtery, the perpetrators of the " bloody act ſhall feel the retributive " hand of juſtice."

The Condè pauſed, while Ceſario continued fixed in ſilent aſtoniſhment at the ſtrange relation of his friend, when Rimualdo again addreſſed him:

" Yet I cannot but feel ſatisfied that " the viſion thus made a ſecond appear- " ance; for if, according to my inten- " tion, I had proceeded immediately " to the cell of Benito, I might have " been diſcovered by the Marques and " his

" his ſervile creatures; our lives, I am
" fully convinced, would not have been
" ſpared, and Conſtanza might perhaps
" have fallen the innocent victim of my
" impetuoſity. But tell me, Ceſario,
" what is your opinion as to the ſcene
" we have juſt witneſſed? what could
" be the purport of that ſcroll which
" cauſed ſuch evident perturbation in
" the Marques? the contents muſt be
" of importance, by the dreadful con-
" flict that wrung his ſoul ere he came
" to the determination of affixing
" thereto his ſeal, and delivering it into
" the hands of the malignant monk."

" It is evident," returned the youth,
" that Sebăſtiano is entruſted with the
" execution of the affair; but what the
" buſineſs is, or whom it concerns, muſt
" ſtill remain with us a matter of mere
" conjecture."

" No,

"No, no, my friend," haſtily interrupted the Condè, "the dread conviction ſuddenly flaſhes acroſs my brain; "there is no room left for doubt: this "monk has continually reſided with, "and ſtyles himſelf father of that lovely "female. What did his former converſe with Mendo portend? That he "was weary of his ſituation, that his "ſafety was endangered; and ſhould "the Marques delay putting his determination in practice with regard to "Conſtanza, he would himſelf expedite "the buſineſs: he has, yes, the arch-villain has ſucceeded; the trepidation "of the Marques accounts for his procraſtination in the buſineſs, and this "unwillingneſs, even at the laſt, to concludethe affair, proves that coërcion "has been practiſed to bring him to "the commiſſion of the deed. But I "will undermine the dark ſcheme, and "by

" by my hopes of ſalvation, whatſoever " may be the projected plan, my ut- " moſt endeavour ſhall be uſed to coun- " teract it; yes, I will purſue him " through the wide world; no danger " whatſoever ſhall impede my courſe: " I have pledged myſelf to Conſtanza, " and will moſt ſacredly adhere to my " promiſe."

Ceſario heard with much uneaſineſs the Condè's paſſionate expreſſions, but made no reply; he foreſaw the imminent difficulties to which his friend would be expoſed, by madly cheriſhing a paſſion which muſt prove in the end, to all appearance, hapleſs: after ſome further converſation on the part of Rimualdo, which proved more fully the deſperate ſtate of his mind, they both retired to take that repoſe of which they ſtood in ſo much need.

Cesario was the first to rise the ensuing morning; for Rimualdo had so far yielded to reflection, when on his pillow, that the early clarion note of morn's shrill harbinger had proclaimed the rising of Aurora ere sleep distilled its powerful charm on the Condè's perturbed soul.

On Rimualdo's quitting his chamber, the youth felt overjoyed at witnessing such a visible amendment in the appearance of his friend; sleep had, indeed, operated as a balm to his harassed spirits. The Condè learnt, with surprise, the lateness of the hour; and the day passed in forming various plans as to the steps he should pursue; but all his ideas proved futile, being a stranger to the line of conduct Sebastiano meant to adopt. If, thought Rimualdo, I should be compelled to follow the monk's

course

courſe to any great diſtance, it were fit that I diſpatch Ceſario with letters to Toledo, excuſing my attendance at Court, and that he afterwards proceed with other diſpatches to the Marques my father; but this plan was ſoon checked, for the Condè felt ſo much dread at the idea of paternal diſpleaſure, that he could not bear that the Marques ſhould learn from himſelf the ſtep he had taken, though he muſt have felt aſſured how ſoon he would come to a knowledge of the fact. Thus occupied, the hours dragged heavily away, and evening's dim veil began to obſcure the bright cheek of ſmiling day, ere Rimualdo had adopted any poſitive mode of action.

Accompanied by Ceſario, he quitted the poſada, and paſſing through the village entered a path leading up the ſide of the mountain, which conducted to the Caſtilio di Badajos, as he felt a

ſtrong deſire to contemplate this antique reſidence of the Marques's anceſtry.

The road, which was wholly unfrequented, wound partly through the foreſt, and ſometimes traverſed the barren ſide of the mountain; the ſteepneſs of the way rendered it particularly tedious, and a conſiderable time elapſed ere they gained the ſummit.

The Caſtilio was of a ſquare form, having four lofty towers at each angle, capped with watch turrets; on each projecting baſtion were alſo towers, but of a ſmaller ſize; a deep broad trench completely ſurrounded this moſt extenſive and fortified edifice, except at the baſe of the weſtern turret, that reared itſelf on a perpendicular ſide of the ſteep.

The view from one part of this aſpiring eminence was majeſtically fine, while the oppoſite ſide preſented nothing but

bold

bold irregular features; the barren chain of the Vatuegas mountains rofe in rugged majefty, forming a vaft amphitheatre; and what ftill added to the gloominefs of the fcene, was the fall of a moft tremendous cataract, whofe intercepted courfe formed a continued din, awful as the thunders rattling peal.

While occupied in the contemplation of this varied fcene, the moon rofe in full fplendour; its rays produced the moft furprifing effect: the fide of the mountain towards the dark foreft was completely under fhade; the tall trees, agitated by the wind, appeared like the waving of a black fheet of water, while the clear light darting full upon the oppofite fide richly variegated the expanded fcene: the contraft of light and fhade on the irregular mafs of rocks produced the moft pleafing effect, while the foaming fheet of water, on which the

moon glittered, was partly concealed by projecting maſſes of the perpendicular ſteep.

Rimualdo gazed for a time on this magnificent aſſemblage of nature's prominent beauties; nor was his friend Ceſario leſs occupied in the delightful contemplation: each made his remarks on the moſt ſtriking objects, and the temperament of their minds being ſimilar, produced the moſt happy concordance of ideas. They at length retired from the ſpot, and, partly deſcending the former path, ſtruck into a remote avenue, which ſoon brought them to the entrance of Sebaſtiano's cell.

They immediately reſumed the ſituation which they occupied the preceding night, under the dark covert of the embrowning trees, where the Condè determined to wait till the monk ſhould, as uſual, quit the cavern, when he purpoſed again

again proceeding to the interior vault, and throwing himſelf at Conſtanza's feet, make known his birth, the immutability of his love, and his fixed reſolution never to abandon the fond purſuit in which his heart and honour were now engaged.

One lingering hour tranſpired, but the monk Benito did not appear; Rimualdo grew impatient of delay, and ſeveral times wiſhed to adventure boldly into the cell, but the prudent intreaties of Ceſario always withheld him; urged by the ardency of his paſſion, reaſon forgot her empire, and he now determined to put his raſh ſcheme into immediate execution: already had the Condè advanced ſome way, when the monk Sebaſtiano emerged from the cave; Rimualdo's ſtep ſeemed to have caught his ear, for he pauſed awhile, and looked around in the act of liſtening attention. On beholding the monk the Condè had precipitately fell back ſome

 paces,

paces, and luckily escaped Benito's regard, who presently moved forwards, and soon disappeared in the windings of the path.

## CHAP. III.

——Amaz'd he ſtood,
Like one aſtown'd, nor fix'd his dubious thoughts:
As when the ſeas expect a gath'ring ſtorm,
The ocean blackens, and the ſilent waves
Sleep on the boſom of the gloomy deep,
Huſh'd in a peace profound; till from the clouds
The furious ſtorm impetuous burſts its way,
Buffets the hoary main, and ſhoves the waves
Before its fury to the frightened ſhores:

——Black *he* ſtood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell.

MILTON.

THE Condè proceeded along the dark avenue, and ſoon beheld the diſtant lamp, whoſe faint glimmer threw a dying gleam upon the damp gloomy walls; a pleaſing tremor unnerved every joint, and Rimualdo's heart throbbed with irregular palpitation.



As

As he quickly advanced to the entrance of the inmoſt cell, the echo of his footſteps reached Conſtanza's ear; her dread augmented as the ſound approached; ſhe roſe from her ſeat in the perturbation of her ſpirits, and the Condè juſt entered the vaulted chamber in time to receive the fear-ſtruck Conſtanza, who uttering a faint cry ſunk almoſt lifeleſs in his arms.

What a bliſsful ſituation did this prove to a lover of Rimualdo's turn of mind. Conceive the youth juſt ſinking on his knee, one arm ſupporting the drooping head of his love, while the other tenderly twined her ſlim waiſt. Her exquiſite countenance, on which the ſpotleſs hue of fear was depicted, met his ardent gaze; the light flowing gloſſy ringlets hung in a profuſion of treſſes over her beauteous heaving boſom. Her luſtrous eyes were cloſed, while, from

from her partly opened lips the perfumed breath of violets ſtole through two even rows of budding lilies.

The Condè placed his trembling hand upon her fluttering heart; with tranſport he felt its returning palpitation. Now ſlowly the roſe's bluſhing dye began to diffuſe its delicate tint over her ſnow-tinctured cheek; the lengthened ſigh burſt from her boſom; the blue ſtreaked clouds gradually uncloſed; when her bright eyes, thoſe pure glittering gems, ſhed beams of mingled chaſtity and love upon the enraptured Condè's watchful features. His hand ſtill reſting on her heart unconſciouſly preſſed with more fervor the delightful ſpot. Conſtanza felt the gentle touch, and then became ſenſible of her ſituation. The carnation's heightened glow quickly ſuffuſed her countenance, and ſhe roſe with a dignified grace, while Rimualdo, ſtill graſping

 her

her hand, preſſed it with delight to his enraptured boſom.

"Ah! why, Senor," ſaid Conſtanza with emotion, "wherefore have you "again ſought to interrupt the repoſe "of a forlorn female like myſelf? "Why will you thus ſeek my ruin? "Believe me, Senor, you are in purſuit "of a flitting ſhadow that will ſoon "elude your graſp.—Ere long all traces "of me will be loſt to you for ever."

"That is the dread thought," replied the Condè, "which racks my ſoul "with inconceivable agony. Oh! Con"ſtanza, place confidence in my inte"grity; unveil this myſtery that in"volves your hapleſs fate; tell me who "and what you are; the hidden cauſe "of your ſecretion in this lone ſpot, "and the approaching circumſtance "which is for ever to deprive me of all "my ſoul prizes in exiſtence.——

"Yet,

" Yet, no, that ſhall not be," exclaimed Rimualdo, after a pauſe; " even " to the extremeſt confine of the globe " will I purſue thy ſteps; no oppoſing " barrier ſhall ſtay my reſolute courſe; " no, death ſhall not ſeparate us; for the " moment that robs thee of life ſhall " alſo cut the thread of my hated " exiſtence."

" And can nothing then impede your " headſtrong career?" returned Conſtanza in a ſolemn tone.

" No, lovelieſt of creatures! nothing " that is mortal ſhall compel me to re-" linquiſh the fond idea which has taken " root in my boſom; nothing———."

" Hold, Senor," replied Conſtanza; " and would you then preſumptuouſly " dare to infringe my command?"

Rimualdo remained ſilent during ſome moments; a dreadful conflict tore

his bosom; words at length found utterance, but the tremulous tone of his voice betrayed the excessive anguish of his soul.

"No, Constanza; I could not dis-
"obey your will, though my compliance
"would irrevocably seal my doom.—
"In mercy then do not pass so dread
"a sentence; drive not to desperation
"that miserable being whose only
"crime consists in distractedly adoring
"you."

A visible change took place in Constanza's features during this passionate address; she bent her eyes full of inexpressible tenderness on the Condè, while the glittering dew of pity moistened her fair cheeks.

"Oh! may I construe this silence,
"these emotions, to the effect of a
"softened feeling for my hapless situa-
"tion; if so, the fostering ray of hope
"will

"will animate awhile love's drooping "plant: yes, I ſhall ſtill feel a degree "of happineſs in fondly believing that "my hopes may be one day realized."

"Theſe tears, Senor, are the effects "of a ſhameful weakneſs; duty prompts "me to paſs the ſentence you ſo much "dread; yet I cannot ſubject a being "to miſery.—Aſſume more fortitude; "fly me, Senor, for you muſt remain a "ſtranger to my birth and family; in-"quire not the cauſe of my ſecretion, "nor ſeek to unravel my future deſtiny; "a ſacred vow ſeals my lips as to theſe "circumſtances, which now wear the "ſemblance of myſtery. Learn, Senor, "that the moment we part, I am loſt to "the world for ever."

"And can nothing then effect a "change in your impending deſtiny? "Is your fate ſo irrevocably fixed, that "neither power nor gold can operate

"on

"on the dreadful ſpell? If theſe will "have effect, I can command them to "their full extent; my family is noble, "I am lineal heir of the houſe of Lara; "the Spaniſh Monarch looks upon our "race with a favourable eye, and riches "are at my own diſpoſal."

"Senor, all will prove alike of none "effect; you muſt relinquiſh every "hope; Conſtanza never can be yours."

A ſtifled ſigh eſcaped her lips as ſhe uttered theſe laſt words, and her tears fell more plentifully. Agitated by conflicting emotions, the Condè ſtood gazing on the heavenly form before him. Conſtanza's extreme trepidation did not eſcape his notice; he again advanced and gently took her unreſiſting hand, then fixing on her a look of the moſt ardent affection, addreſſed her in a tender and heſitating voice:

"Tell

"Tell me, Conſtanza, on my knee I
"beſeech you, anſwer me! Could you
"look with a degree of favour on the
"love-ſick mortal now before you,
"would you liſten to my profeſſions of
"laſting fidelity, would you give the
"miſerable Rimualdo ſome hopes of
"future bliſs, if there were no impedi-
"ment to my love?"

The deepeſt crimſon now fluſhed Conſtanza's cheeks; her lips had never yet uttered a falſehood; nor could ſhe, in the preſent inſtance, ſo groſsly wrong her feelings as to deny a truth of which ſhe had become ſo fully aſſured by the internal emotions of her boſom: ſhe therefore continued ſilent; but it was a ſilence ſo teeming with conviction, as made the Condè fully acquainted with his felicity; and his tranſport led him, for the firſt time, to carry that hand he held to his lips. The warm preſſure

cauſed

caused an exquisite thrill of delight throughout Constanza's delicate frame: she endeavoured to assume a look of displeasure, but the effort was vain: it was a struggle between duty and love; but potent love proved victor.

"And can it then be?" cried the overjoyed Condè; "does Constanza "bless me with her smiles? do I possess any share of her affection? With "your own lips then seal my bliss, most "adored of women."

After a pause Constanza replied:

"Ah! Senor Rimualdo, why will you "torture thus a helpless creature? Do "not my powerful feelings—evince—" She paused: the concluding words trembled on her lips, and found vent in sounds wholly inarticulate. But the Condè had heard enough; he pressed her hand more fervently; and for some

moments teſtified his expreſſive bliſs in audible terms. Suddenly his manner changed; his countenance aſſumed an appearance of devotional zeal; he moved with ſolemn pace towards the crucifix, that hung beneath the lamp, and, reverentially proſtrating himſelf before it, pronounced theſe words in a ſolemn tone:

" By the Supreme Ruler of the in-
" comprehenſive ſyſtem of the univerſe;
" by that merciful Divinity who ſuffered
" for our redemption, and by all that is
" immortal, I ſwear, that my future
" days ſhall be unceaſingly devoted to
" the innocent object now preſent.
" Should I ever attain to the ſummit of
" my wiſhes, heaven ſhall witneſs my
" unceaſing gratitude: but ſhould Con-
" ſtanza be loſt to me, no other female
" ſhall receive my vows of love. I will
" devote myſelf to religion alone, and

" die

" die the ſequeſtered inhabitant of ſome
" gloomy cloiſter."

" Oh! impetuous, thoughtleſs Ri-
" mualdo!" cried Conſtanza, burſting into tears; " what have you uttered?"

" Ceaſe, ceaſe, my love!" exclaimed the Condè paſſionately; " my ſole hap-
" pineſs depends on thee; and ſhould
" fate decree our ſeparation, religion
" and ſolitude will be moſt calculated for
" the reſidue of my exiſtence; they will
" mellow my exceſs of grief, and I ſhall,
" in the end, meet death with calmneſs
" and reſignation."

As Rimualdo uttered the concluſive words, a ſound of advancing footſteps broke upon the ear.

" God of heaven!" cried the affrighted Conſtanza: " 'tis then as I feared; my
" father has ſurpriſed us."

A gid-

A giddineſs overpowered her, and ſhe once more ſunk lifeleſs into the Condè's arms. Now the noiſe approached; and, in a few ſeconds, a ſeeming ſtranger entered the cell. A brown beaver covered his front; over which waved a crimſon plume. His veſt and ample cloak were of the ſame dark colour; looſe travelling boots completely covered his legs, and at either heel he wore a goading ſpur; a deep black girdle ſurrounded his waſte, and buckled in front; above which appeared two piſtol handles, and the braſs pommel of a ſtiletto; to a belt, ſlung o'er his ſhoulder, was alſo ſuſpended a maſſive ſword.

The unknown ſtarted back at beholding Rimualdo; who, equally aſtoniſhed, bent his eyes full upon the object before him; in whoſe form, notwithſtanding the garb that enveloped him, he preſently recognized the perſon of the monk Sebaſtiano. Rage flaſhed from his rolling

eyes; the color faded from his palſied cheeks; his mouth was in part uncloſed, which added to the ghaſtlineſs of his aſpect; and a death-dooming ferocity marked his general appearance. He ruſhed furiouſly forwards; and, brutally tearing Conſtanza from Rimualdo's arms, unſheathed his poniard, exclaiming:

"Wretch! villain! receive the re-"ward thy temerity ſo juſtly merits."

The promptitude of his motions rendered it impoſſible for the Condè to put himſelf on his guard, and he yielded to Sebaſtiano's impetuous ſtrength; who firmly graſped his right arm, and aimed the uplifted weapon ready to pierce his boſom.

Conſtanza, awakened to a ſcene of the Condè's danger, fearleſs flew towards her father, and, throwing herſelf proſtrate

at

at his feet, begged aloud for mercy. Deaf to all intreaties, the blow would have been ſtruck, had ſhe not ſprung forward and ſeized his hand; which, breaking the full vehemence of the thruſt, the dagger's point pierced her left arm, that reſted on Rimualdo's boſom. Regardleſs of the wound he had inflicted, the ruffian daſhed the bleeding victim to the earth; and again prepared to ſtrike the object of his rage, when Ceſario at that inſtant ruſhed into the vault, and thus taking Sebaſtiano by ſurprize, cloſed with him; and, after diſarming, threw him to the earth, and prepared to inflict that death from which he had ſo happily reſcued his friend.

Conſtanza, uttering a ſcream, reſumed her ſupplications for that very object whoſe feelings ſhe had before ſo vainly endeavoured to intereſt; and her prayers, aided

aided by the Condè's entreaties, ſtayed the fulfilment of Ceſario's purpoſe.

Sebaſtiano now roſe from the earth; his countenance was the index of a villain's heart. Hatred, malignity, rage, and revenge were the characteriſtics of every feature. The Condè's regard was ſuddenly attracted by the blood which trickled faſt from Conſtanza's wound; he tore away the ſilk ſcarf that hung over his breaſt, and bound it tightly round her arm. While thus occupied, Ceſario kept his eyes fixed on Sebaſtiano, who, with diſorderly ſtep and lowering down-caſt look, paced to and fro the vault. Rimualdo at length required the aſſiſtance of his friend, to raiſe Conſtanza from the earth; already were they ſupporting her to the rug, when the lamp on a ſudden became extinguiſhed, and, in a moment, the report of a piſtol echoed through the cell.

cell. This unexpected explosion stunned the Condè and his friend, who stood motionless during some moments. As the sound died away, a distant rustling noise was heard; Rimualdo started from his trance; while Cesario, calling on his friend, cautioned him to be upon his guard; and they both, on the instant, unsheathed their rapiers.

It was some time ere they discovered the avenue which conducted to the interior vault; followed by Cesario, Rimualdo flew to the mouth of the outward cell, which he gained just time enough to behold Sebastiano and Constanza both mounted, and proceeding along the path at full gallop.

The Condè stood, thunderstruck, tracing their progress, till they disappeared in the gloom of the wood. Despair became then the ruling passion of his breast, and he loudly execrated himself

himſelf for his remiſſneſs, in having viſited the cavern on foot; as he might have, otherwiſe, immediately purſued Sebaſtiano's route: he however determined to return to the poſada without further loſs of time, and, mounting his courſer, endeavour to diſcover the route which the wily monk had taken.

In his way to the village, Ceſario attempted to draw him from his purpoſe by every prudent argument; but Rimualdo was deaf to all his ſuggeſtions, and merely deſired to be made acquainted with what had occurred during his abſence in the cave.

"I remained ſecreted, according "to your requeſt," replied Ceſario; "nor did anything occur till the monk's "return; when the diſtant ſound of the "trampling of horſes firſt ſtruck my "ear; and ere long I perceived a perſon,

"mounted

" mounted and leading another ſteed " by the rein, who advanced rapidly " along the pathway: not conjecturing, " from his appearance, that it could be " the Sebaſtiano, thus diſguiſed, I merely " conjectured that it was ſome paſſing " traveller; for which reaſon I did not " think it neceſſary to give you any " notice of his approach. But how great " was my aſtoniſhment at beholding this " ſuppoſed ſtranger check the horſes be- " fore the entrance of the cavern; who, " alighting, ſoon diſappeared in the ſur- " rounding gloom. I followed his ſteps " without delay, and happily arrived " in time to extricate my friend from " the impending danger which threat- " ened him."

Every other idea was, for a moment, baniſhed from Rimualdo's thoughts; in the perturbation of his mind, he had wholly forgotten that it was to Ceſario

 he

he was now a ſecond time indebted for his life; he threw his arms around the youth's neck, exclaiming, "What "idea muſt my friend have formed "of my gratitude, from this ſhame- "ful remiſneſs! Let it convince him "how much I am become the ſlave "of paſſion: for Ceſario once knew "that Reaſon held her ſeat within "this breaſt. Oh! let the change in "my conduct—let this thoughtleſneſs "be attributed to love: and yet nothing "can ever plead my excuſe."

"Ah, Senor! there needs no apo- "logy. On ſuch a ſubject, a friend "requires no explanation. I know the "bewildered ſtate of your brain; nor "would the moſt unmerited conduct "on your part affect me in the preſent "inſtance. I ſhould calmly await that "happy moment when deliberate thought "would convince you of your error."

"Noble

"Noble youth!" replied the Condè; "I can never value enough ſuch gene- "roſity of ſentiment! How am I bound "to bleſs the hour which firſt preſented "you to me!"

They continued converſing thus till their arrival at the poſada. During the time that the horſes were ſaddling, the Condè gave Ceſario ſuch directions as the emergency of the circumſtance required: he directed his friend to return to Toledo with the utmoſt ſpeed; and gave him inſtructions as to the purport of the anſwer that was to be returned, if any meſſenger ſhould be diſpatched from court to inquire the cauſe of his non-attendance. He particularly requeſted Ceſario to be ſecret, as to the ſtep he had taken, and the real cauſe of his conduct; and, laſtly, informed him, that ſhould he deem his preſence neceſſary, he would diſpatch a

letter to that effect. Having bade each other adieu, they mounted, and took their reſpective routes.

Rimualdo once more entered the tufted foreſt; urging his full-blooded ſteed he ſcowered along: the winding avenues now became familiar to him. Sometimes dark ſheets of clouds ſlowly moving over the orb of night, obſcured for a time her favouring beams: now they paſs: when the darting gleam throws a chaſte radiance on the ſloping edge of the ebon maſs, and the clear light contraſts fiercely with the gloomy cloak that ſtill continues to mantle the moon's pale cheek: at length ſhe burſts forth from the pitchy veil; and, majeſtically floating in the dark blue expanſe, diffuſes her ſilvery rays wide o'er the ſtill boſom of the earth.

Ere long the Condè approached the fatal cell, wherein the late ſcene had

taken

taken place ; ſtrange emotions pervaded his breaſt ; and he unconſciouſly checked his horſe before the mouth of the cavern.

Soon the recollection of Conſtanza's heavenly notes, as when firſt he had beheld her ; the graceful motion of her lovely perſon ; every circumſtance recurred freſh to his imagination : the deluſion operated moſt forcibly on his ſoul ; it gave riſe to ſenſations of ſadneſs, that filled his boſom with a thrill of exquiſite tenderneſs. Preſently his liſtening ear caught the dulcet note of the penſive nightingale ; it was the only ſound that diſturbed the tranquil ſleep ſleep of nature. Rimualdo's feelings became too acute ; he felt an aching at his heart ; the ſtarting tear dimmed his ſight, and frequent ſighs iſſued from his heaving breaſt ; for Conſtanza was fled, and perhaps loſt to him for ever. The idea

idea roused him; he spurred his bearer, and resumed his rapid course. As he arrived at the ruined chapel, his thoughts underwent an instantaneous change; the dreadful vision came fresh into his recollection, and banished for a time all idea of his love: he cast a timid glance upon the mouldering portal: at that instant the raven's death-peal rung shrilly in his ear: the Condè felt the palsied hand of terror, and, averting his regard, swiftly passed the dreaded spot. A solemn knell, borne on the fleeting breeze, suddenly arrested his attention: it caused for the instant an additional thrill of horror; but thought convinced him of his folly. Rimualdo blushed at the timidity of his nature; it was the Castilio clock that announced the third hour of morn.

Unconscious of the road he should take, the Condè suffered himself to be led,

led, and advanced for a conſiderable time with the ſame ſpeed, till the animal began at length to relax in his pace.

Thus the hours paſſed on, till dimpled morn firſt reared her ſmiling face, chaſing the dull miſt of night that lingered o'er the eaſtern horizon; her genial influence awakened the plumed ſongſters of the foreſt; who, riſing from their moſs-beds, offered their matin chant to the Divine Mover of all. Faint ſaffron rays now lace the light blue diſtance; which, gradually aſſuming a deeper glow, tinged the heaven with golden gleams. The quick approach of day's tremendous luminary ſoon becomes more viſible; when the dun clouds of night, ſtill lingering o'er the weſtern circuit, precipitately ſpeed their courſe, and vaniſh from the ſight.

Now the blazing orb, advancing in its perpendicular courſe, peeps above the

the level of the globe, and ſoon diſplays its burning maſs: the powerful radiance abſorbs every fainter light, and the whole aſſumes one luſtrous appearance, robing the verdant face of nature in gold refulgent.

It was at ſuch a moment that Rimualdo emerged from the ſhadowy foreſt. Behind him roſe the Vatuegas' ſteeps, in a ſemicircular form; and on the eminence of one was ſtill viſible the proud Caſtilio di Badajos, lowering o'er the vaſt extent of foliage, whoſe confine he had juſt paſſed. Before him a wide, even plain ſpread its luxuriant boſom for ſome miles, which terminated in the irregular map of the Sierra de Pico and Arila hills; above which the aſpiring Tablada mountains terminated the diſtance, in light blue waving lines.

It was now that for the firſt time the Condè felt the folly of the purſuit wherein he was engaged: he checked his horſe;

horſe; awhile he gazed in ſilence on the expanſe of country before him; roads branched off in every direction from the verge of the wood, and he knew not which to take.

Reaſon at this critical juncture began to diffuſe her cool influence o'er Rimualdo's brain; and he argued awhile with himſelf on the impracticability of the ſcheme he had adopted.

But this proved only the firſt link of the great chain of difficulties which preſently recurred to his recollection. His abſence from court muſt become a matter of aſtoniſhment; and the circumſtance would ſoon gain his father's ear: what would then be the dreadful conſequence? He muſt forfeit the ſight of his loved parents; he muſt linger out a wretched exiſtence, loaded with a father's dreadful curſe. The thought was too much, and the Condè involuntarily

turned the head of his courser to retrace his steps through the forest. He advanced but a few paces; for Constanza suddenly recurred to his aching fancy; arrayed in all the bewitching livery of tenderness, simplicity, and transcendant beauty. The recollection was sufficient; Prudence on the instant fled her seat; the whisperings of Reason were lulled in passion's tumultuous cradle. The remembrance of his promise, with the more binding vow he had so solemnly made in Constanza's presence, flushed full upon his mind.

"Gracious Powers!" exclaimed the Condè aloud; "and could I then act "like the basest of villains? What— "coward-like, abandon the dear enchant- "ing object whom I have sacredly "sworn to protect, and leave her a prey "to the detested Marques and his vile "adherent? Oh! how I despise my- "self

"self for having thus yielded to the mean "idea of self-preservation! Every thing "should give way to honor; nothing "can obliterate an oath registered in "heaven!—Besides," continued Rimualdo mentally, "my passion is not "altogether hopeless; for Constanza's "emotions, nay, her words prove that "she is also susceptible, in some degree, "of the heart-thrilling passion. Yes!" cried Rimualdo enthusiastically; "she "returns my ardent affection!"

The thought was rapturous; and he remained for some minutes absorbed in the most delightful train of mental enthusiasm.

Rimualdo, now lost to all consideration, set spurs to his horse, and proceeded in that track which mere conjecture led him to imagine the monk Sebastiano had taken.

He continued to travel ſome miles; and arrived at length at a village that ſtretched itſelf along the baſe of one of the Pico mountains. He rode up to the beſt inn the place afforded, and, alighting, began to make eager inquiries of the landlord if any traveller had been ſeen to paſs that way in the courſe of the morning. His hoſt, after ſome conſideration, aſſured the Condè that no ſtranger whatſoever had been that day ſeen to paſs the village. Not ſatisfied with this information, he made inquiries at ſeveral of the neighbouring cottages, but without effect; for he merely heard a confirmation of the innkeeper's intelligence.

Torn with a thouſand contending paſſions, Rimualdo returned to the poſada, unconſcious what ſtep he ſhould take. In this ſtate of mental diſquietude he continued during ſome time; when the maſter of the houſe ſuddenly tapped

at

at the door of his apartment, and entered, followed by a ſtranger in a travelling habit.

Having begged excuſe for the bold intruſion, the hoſt thus addreſſed the Condè:

" As I was led to conjecture, Senor, " that ſomething of importance muſt " inſtigate your very eager inquiries, I " was determined, if poſſible, to procure " you the deſired information: the mo- " ment therefore that this hidalgo enter- " ed my houſe I renewed my endeavours " of giving you ſatisfaction; and from " your deſcription of the travellers of " whom you are in purſuit, I do not " doubt but he can fully acquaint you " with the route they have taken, as he, " not many hours ſince, paſſed two " perſons whoſe appearance coincides " with that of the ſtrangers whom you " ſearch."

Rimualdo earneſtly requeſted that the ſtranger would make the deſired communication without delay; adding, that the circumſtance was of the utmoſt importance to him. When the traveller addreſſed him as follows:

"It is ſome days, Senor, ſince I took "my departure from Valladolid for the "city of Arila, which place I quitted "ere dawn this morning. As I was "deſirous of expediting my journey to "Aleautara, whither I am bound, I "took a road which was dreary and un-"frequented; it being by far the ſhorteſt "cut to this village. In the courſe of "the route I met two travellers; and "the path being in that part particularly "narrow, I was forced to guide my "horſe towards the hedge that they "might have ſufficient room to paſs "me; and by this means I was enabled "to obſerve them with minuteneſs,

"which

"which I ſhould not have otherwiſe "done."

The ſtranger then proceeded to deſcribe the very dreſs Sebaſtiano wore; and the perſon of Conſtanza, particularly noticing the ſilk ſcarf that bound her arm.

The Condè learnt, on inquiry, that ſcarcely three hours had elapſed ſince the rencontre had taken place; and that the traveller had not met a third perſon in the courſe of the route.

Having loaded the ſtranger with a thouſand thanks, and handſomely rewarded the attention of his hoſt, Rimualdo ordered his horſe, which being ſoon in readineſs, he mounted; and quitted the poſada accompanied by the traveller, who kindly offered to conduct him to the path which he ſhould purſue.

After retracing the way through the village, which the Condè had before paſſed, his companion directed him to ſtrike into a narrow tract, which appeared at a ſmall diſtance. Having again confeſſed his obligations to the ſtranger, Rimualdo bade him farewell; and, giving his ſteed the rein, which had acquired freſh vigor from a plentiful ſupply of provender, he bounded forward at full ſpeed.

## CHAP. IV.

No, 'tis Slander,
Whofe edge is fharper than the fword, whofe tongue
Out-venoms all the worms of Nile, whofe breath
Rides on the pofting winds, and doth belie
All corners of the world. Kings, queens, and ftates,
Maids, matrons, nay, the fecrets of the grave,
This viperous flander enters. SHAKSPEARE.

Diftracted fury all the man poffefs'd;
And agonies of rage o'erwhelm'd his breaft:
Sometimes his eyes were fix'd upon the ground;
Then, ftarting up, he wildly ftar'd around:
He gnafhed his angry teeth; his heaving breaft,
And trembling joints the rage within confefs'd.
BLACKMORE.

CESARIO, according to the Condè's defire, proceeded without delay. In the route to Toledo, his mind being fully occupied with the recent fcenes that had tranfpired in the foreft, the ferocious deed which Sebaftiano would fain

fain have perpetrated to rid himſelf of an intruder, ſpoke the depravedneſs of his ſoul, and fully demonſtrated that ſome ſecret motive muſt have urged him to the commiſſion of ſuch a deed of atrocity. The youth could not refrain from coinciding in opinion with Rimualdo; for he felt convinced that the monk was not Conſtanza's father, but ſome abandoned wretch purpoſely procured to put the will of the Marques di Badajos in practice.

Now the fair form of the innocent victim recurred to Ceſario's fancy; he felt an unaccountable intereſt in her welfare; for he was internally aſſured, that guilt was a ſtranger to her ſoul: nor did he feel aſtoniſhed that his friend ſhould have yielded to all the powerful influence of her heavenly charms.

The viſion which had twice met the Condè's terrified gaze, did not fail to raiſe

raiſe conjectures in Ceſario's mind. He endeavoured to account, in ſome meaſure for theſe extraordinary appearances; but having no clue which might in the ſmalleſt degree develope the myſtery of his ideas, proved futile; and he at length relinquiſhed the fruitleſs inquiry.

Ceſario was not a little aſtoniſhed at the monk's preſence of mind, and the ſtratagem he had ſo artfully practiſed to accompliſh his eſcape. For it was evident that he muſt have extinguiſhed the lamp, while they were buſied in aſſiſting Conſtanza: and he did not doubt but the piſtol was diſcharged to produce the conſequence it had ſo completely effected.

But the event that occupied moſt Ceſario's brain, was the mad purſuit in which his friend was engaged, and the unhappy events that were likely to ac-

crue

crue from a perſeverance in his unthinking conduct. From what he had learnt from Rimualdo of the character of his father the Marques del Lara, he plainly foreſaw that the moſt dreadful conſequences would ariſe from that quarter; and from the evident connexion there was between Sebaſtiano and the Marques di Badajos relating to Conſtanza, he felt the utmoſt dread for the ſafety of his friend. Yielding to ſuch ideas, it may naturally be ſuppoſed that Ceſario's journey was productive of little ſatisfaction: he felt for the Condè the pure affection of a brother; and to witneſs his happineſs was now, on earth, the only joy to which he aſpired.

A prey to theſe conflicting emotions, the youth purſued his journey, and arrived at Toledo by duſk the following evening.

In

In the course of the ensuing day, as Cesario had expected, a messenger was dispatched from court with inquiries after Rimualdo, to whom he delivered the excuse his friend had desired. In his walks through the city, Cesario still continued guarded in his conduct, as he understood from Geronimo, and several other of the Condè's domestics, that strangers masked, had been observed to parade near the hotel towards the close of night. There was not one of the attendants that did not revere Rimualdo and his chosen friend. Geronimo in particular was indebted to Cesario for the preservation of his life, and the faithful fellow justly conceived it an everlasting obligation: his love and gratitude was equally divided between his master, whom he had attended from infancy, and the adopted youth. The affability, feeling, and generosity of Cesario could not fail to endear him to Ri-

mualdo's houſehold, of whom there was not one that would have ſhrunk from the moſt dangerous enterprize to ſerve either the Condè or his friend.

Nothing material occurred till the ſecond morning after Ceſario's return to Toledo, when a domeſtic arrived poſt from Navarre, with a letter from the Marques del Lara, which was of the utmoſt importance, and required to be forthwith delivered into Rimualdo's hands. This intelligence was a thunder-bolt to Ceſario, who immediately made inquiries of the meſſenger as to the health of the Marques and Marqueſa, fearing leaſt one of them might have ſuddenly fallen a prey to ſome dangerous diſtemper; but the horſeman informed the youth that no ſuch event had taken place; that the Marques and his lady were free from indiſpoſition, but that the packet muſt undoubtedly contain mat-

ters

ters of great importance by the ſpeed which he had been commanded to uſe, and the evident perturbation in the Marques's manner on his delivery of the letter.

Ceſario knew not what ſtep to purſue: to attempt following Rimualdo was now futile; beſides, the bearer of the packet was merely to wait the Condè's peruſal of the expreſs, which was to be anſwered, in writing, immediately; and then the meſſenger was to take horſe again without further delay.

After revolving in his brain, ſuch ideas as the emergency of the caſe required, he at length found that every excuſe would prove inſufficient, and concluded with ſimply informing the meſſenger that the Condè had been, and would ſtill continue abſent from Toledo, for ſome days, on a pleaſurable excurſion.

Such was the meſſage with which the horſeman ſet out on his return to the kingdom of Navarre.

It will now be neceſſary to ſpeak of the Marques del Lara, and the purport of this letter, which was of ſuch apparent conſequence to the Condè.

Several of the grandees of Spain, who had been attendants on the Court, while the Marques was engaged in his miniſterial capacity, and to whom he had been moſt attached, ſtill continued in the ſuite of the monarch: it was on theſe venerable noblemen that Rimualdo's parent relied for the proper information reſpecting his ſon's proceedings.

With what ſatisfaction did he receive their ſeveral letters, giving an exact detail of his firſt appearance at the levee; how was the pride of the Marques gratified

tified at the partial reception he had witnessed from his sovereign, and the eligible places to which he had been promoted; he made every circumstance known to the fond Marquesa his wife, and they mutually felt an ecstasy of delight in having such a son.

But how different were the causes from which sprang this excess of parental affection! Rimualdo's father having studied the temper of his Sovereign, presaged the most happy consequences; from the very flattering audience he had given the Condè, he pictured to his fond imagination the budding wreath of honours which would soon entwine the brows of his son: the idea was highly flattering to the haughty soul of the Marques: he gave full vent to the transport with which it inspired him; and thus felt for Rimualdo an augmentation of love, arising from flattered pride. The Marquesa's sensations, on the contrary, were

were those of a fond mother glorying in the worthiness of her offspring; she felt the refinement of bliss: it was not the kindness of the king, nor his lavish bounty, that gave rise to the emotions of her bosom, but the transcendant qualifications of her son, that merited thus his Monarch's favours: this was the thought which filled her with raptures inexpressible, and tears sprang from her gladdened eyes, bathing a countenance on which mental satisfaction was visibly depicted.

But if this first step to kingly favour produced such an effect on the Marques, what were his transports when the news arrived, giving the detail of his gallant conduct, and his rescue of the Spanish Sovereign during the noble chase in the woods of Placentia? what were his feelings when made acquainted with the subsequent behaviour of the King, the

badge

badge of honour with which he had invested the Condè, and the unreftrained profeffions of everlafting efteem and protection which he publicly manifefted towards him? Language is altogether inadequate to defcribe his joyful emotions on this occafion: he, notwithftanding, concealed the extent of his feelings from his fon, a ftep which he deemed highly political; and therefore in the letter which he penned to him on the occafion, fpoke of his approbation but in general terms. Thus Rimualdo was beloved of his parents, protected by his Sovereign, and the admiration of the whole Court.

The Condè had planned his expedition to the foreft with fuch fecrefy that he conceived it wholly impoffible that any one fhould gain a knowledge of his route or the purport of his journey; but how futile proves the moft guarded

 conduct,

conduct, when opposed to the prying eye of malice and hatred! the affair was by some secret means discovered, not by the Marques del Lara's friends, but by an unknown person: for the very evening after Cesario's return to Toledo, from quitting the Condè at the village, an anonymous letter reached the hands of Rimualdo's father, the purport of which was as follows:

" *To the* NOBLE MARQUES DON
" FERNANDEZ DEL LARA, *at his*
" CASTILIO *in the Kingdom of*
" NAVARRE.

" MY LORD,

" AN unknown has thought it his " duty to make you acquained with an " occurrence that threatens your family " with eternal *ignominy* and *disgrace*.

" I can conceive your astonishment " at these words: they must be harsh " and repugnant to your feelings; but

" the

" the urgency of the caſe calls forth " the language of truth to rouſe you " to a juſt ſenſe of your danger: yes, " my lord, the greatneſs of your houſe " is concerned. The ſun of honour " which has ever ſhed its glorious light " on the race of Lara, is dimmed by an " unworthy cloud; its luſtrous rays re- " cede, and will ſhortly vaniſh for ever, " unleſs prompt meaſures are adopted " to check the monſtrous growing " evil.

" From what I have frequently heard, " Senor, reſpecting your character, I " revere and look up to you as one of " thoſe grandees whoſe actions beſpeak " true Spaniſh nobility of blood. Poſ- " ſeſſing ſuch knowledge of you, I feel " moſt acutely for your ſituation, and " ſympathize in the agonies which will " rend your boſom on the peruſal of the " enſuing lines: it is of your ſon Don " Rimualdo I would ſpeak; how wil-

" lingly would I forbear the narration!
" but no, it muſt not be.

" You muſt have heard, my lord, in
" all probability, of our Monarch's pe-
" culiar partiality to the Condè? how
" flattering muſt his reception at court
" have proved to you, and the marks
" of favour which were immediately
" heaped upon him? But, as if honour
" courted alliance with your ſon, a
" lucky chance ſoon preſented itſelf of
" eminently ſignalizing himſelf in the
" ſervice of his King: this rooted him
" at once in his Sovereign's eſteem;
" and he has in conſequence been
" honoured with a higher poſt near the
" perſon of his Majeſty, and inveſted
" with a badge of merit never before
" beſtowed on one ſo green in years as
" the Condè. Yet, notwithſtanding
" this ſplendid opening to favour, and
" all theſe incitements to youthful pride,
" Senor

" Senor Rimualdo has debaſed himſelf " by an action unprecedented in the " records of his family ; and I am well " aſſured wholly diſcountenanced by " his noble father : not that the *crime* " originates in himſelf; no, my lord, " through the machinations of an in- " ſinuating youth, Ceſario by name, " with whom he lives on terms of the " ſtricteſt friendſhip, your ſon has been " introduced to an abandoned low born " girl, who has ſo artfully conducted " herſelf, that the unguarded Condè has " been induced to proffer her eternal " vows of love ; nay, he has even " ſworn to make her his by the ſacred " bond of religion; and, wholly regard- " leſs of his birth and ſituation with " the King, has abandoned the court " and fled the city of Toledo in purſuit " of this diſhonoured plebeian wretch.

"Oh! my lord, what muſt be the
" acuteneſs of your feelings, when mine
" are agitated ſo forcibly by a ſimple
" recital of the fact. How can I find
" language to ſooth the conflicting
" emotions of your ſoul? How ſhall I
" plead in extenuation of the crime of
" which your bewildered, headſtrong
" ſon has been guilty, and pour forth
" dire execrations on that deceitful vil-
" lain, whoſe wily arts firſt led him from
" the path of rectitude? There is but
" one alternative for a Spaniard thus in-
" jured in his honour: the dagger's reek-
" ing blade ſhould pierce the grimed
" heart of the vile miſcreant. As for
" the fair-faced ſeducer, you need be
" under no apprehenſion, my lord, on
" her account, for ſoon ſhe will be placed
" beyond the reach of your ſon for
" ever."

The Marques ſtill graſping the packet in his trembling hand, ſtood petrified, while his boſom was torn with a conflict of the direſt paſſions. Again, his eye glanced over the hateful ſcroll; ſtill he diſcredited his ſenſes; and a third time peruſed the letter. It was not till then that the conviction flaſhed upon his frenzied brain; he caſt the paper to the earth, then furiouſly roſe from his ſeat, and ſtriking his forehead with vehemence, traverſed the chamber with diſordered ſtep. Sometimes he would pauſe; but the thoughtful action was but of momentary duration: additional fire ſoon kindled in his boſom, his foot ſpurned the ground in an agony of paſſion, and he would again move in the ſame unſteady pace.

Long did the Marques indulge this vehemence of rage; half ſtifled execrations would ſometimes iſſue from his

boſom, which was now become the abode of the moſt tumultuous paſſions.

The Marqueſa had been abſent from her lord's ſtudy during this dreadful conflict; but on being made acquainted with the arrival of a letter from Toledo, ſhe haſtened thither with all the pleaſing anxiouſneſs of a mother, fondly conjecturing that ſome freſh account was arrived, which would ſtill heighten their mutual delight on Rimualdo's account.

On entering the chamber, what were her ſenſations on beholding the violent agitation of her huſband! a chilly damp iſſued from every pore, and ſhe ſtood awhile ſtatue ſtruck with terrified amazement.

The Marques continued to traverſe the ſtudy for ſome minutes without having obſerved the perſon of the Marqueſa; he ſtopped ſhort on beholding her, and

and ſtood awhile riveting his eyes upon her features, while his whole aſpect aſſumed the moſt forbidding expreſſion. Suddenly ſtarting from the ſpot, he ſeiſed the packet, and conducting the Marqueſa to a ſeat, gave the fatal paper into her hand, without pronouncing a ſyllable.

There was ſomething inexpreſſible in his manner, calculated to inſpire dread; a ſecret horror numbed every joint of the Marqueſa; ſhe raiſed the letter with difficulty, but a film ſeemed to obſcure her ſight, and ſhe powerleſs dropped her trembling hand. After a violent ſtruggle ſhe at length collected a degree of for.itnde to counteract in ſome meaſure thoſe fears that pervaded her breaſt; and having aſſumed ſufficient ſtrength of mind, reſolutely fixed her eyes upon the ſcroll, and began to run over its miſchievous contents: every line increaſed her

growing agitation, till ſhe came to that part which ſpoke in ſuch direct terms of her ſon's imprudence. At that inſtant, the violent temper of the Marques her huſband, and the conſequences which ſhe foreſaw would accrue to the Condè, from a line of conduct ſo derogatory to himſelf and family, raiſed all the acute feelings of a doating mother in her breaſt. They ſoon became too poignant for endurance; the packet fell from her hand, her ſickened eyes cloſed, and ſhe ſunk motionleſs into the arms of the Marques, who flew to ſupport her.

The voice of the Marques ſoon alarmed the female attendants of his lady, who haſtily ran to the ſtudy, and by his orders conducted their miſtreſs to her apartment in this lifeleſs condition.

After repeated attempts to revive her, the Marqueſa at length awoke from this ſtate

ſtate of torpitude ; a flood of tears ſoon found vent, and her firſt inquiries were concerning the Marques, whoſe preſence ſhe deſired without delay in her chamber. One of the women in conſequence repaired to her lord's ſtudy, and notified to him the Marqueſa's wiſh.

The Marques roſe on the inſtant and followed the attendant. As he entered the apartment, every one was ordered to retire. When alone with the Marqueſa he approached the bed, and taking her hand, which trembled with perturbation, addreſſed her in a voice, whoſe accents, though intenerated, ſtill betrayed mental agony. After inquiring into the ſtate of her health, the Marques thus continued :

" The effect which that anonymous " epiſtle has produced on your feelings " is not aſtoniſhing, ſince it has required " in me the utmoſt powers of ratioci-

" nation to quell the furious dictates " of my roused passions. Oh! were " he but now before me, the bitter " curses I would shower upon his head " should rend his degenerate heart. " What! vow eternal love, proffer mar- " riage to a fameless wretch, to a vile " prostitute! where was all the wonted " pride of nobility? was he so utterly " lost to all nobleness, that no one spark " of the genuine blood of Lara kindled " with indignation in his veins? did " no recollection of parental admoni- " tion recur to his poisoned brain? no; " he is lost to shame, and spurns those " precepts which it has been my constant " study to inculcate.

" And, after I have reared the plant " with so much care and toil, are these " at last the fruits of all my labour?— " But I will tear up the bastard root; " it shall be blasted by the curses of him

" that

"that ſo carefully preſerved it from the "tendereſt infancy—yes, by my God "I ſwear"———

The Marqueſa, who had long liſtened to the increaſing rage of her lord with agony unutterable, could no longer contain her hitherto ſtifled emotions; ſhe ſprang from the couch, and, ſeizing with both hands the upraiſed arm of the Marques, exclaimed aloud:

"Hold! hold! my lord! my huſ-"band! in mercy hear me ſpeak; "and let my voice calm this tempeſtu-"ous ſea of paſſion that ſtorms within "your breaſt! let tranquil reaſon reſume "her peaceful empire o'er your paſſions! "Conſider, my lord, our ſon's ſhining "qualifications may have created him "enemies: this letter may prove a baſe "fabrication; it is every way calculated "to inflame the brain; and concludes "with

" with the moſt bloody dictate; it urges
" you to murder: for *the dagger's*
" *reeking blade ſhould pierce the grimed*
" *heart of the vile miſcreant.* The
" author, too, baſely ſcreenes himſelf
" from detection by affixing no ſigna-
" ture to his artful epiſtle: and yet on
" the bare authority of this anonymous
" and apparent malicious letter, you
" would raſhly condemn our ſon un-
" heard!

" Even ſuppoſe him guilty, my lord,
" of an indiſcretion; it is but one of the
" multifarious faults, the certain attend-
" ants of youth; and the error, however
" inſignificant in itſelf, may have been
" thus exaggerated by the prolific brain
" of malice or envy. Beſides, Rimualdo's
" inherent virtues ſhould be placed in
" the ſcale, to counterbalance one youth-
" ful folly. The doctrines and manners
" of the ſage are rarely found in thoſe
" of

" of inexperienced years; and even where
" ſuch a phenomenon does appear, it
" rather excites our diſguſt than admi-
" ration.

" Depend on't, my lord, the Condè
" will fully clear himſelf from this moſt
" infamous aſperſion; nor will I ſo far
" contaminate his underſtanding as to
" ſuppoſe for an inſtant that he would
" ſelect for the friend of his boſom any
" youth, capable of practiſing ſuch a
" ſcheme to undermine his peace, his
" morals, and conſequently the future
" wellfare of his exiſtence."

The Marques, after a pauſe, replied:

" You ſpeak the language of an over-
" fond mother. 'Tis true I did not ſup-
" poſe our ſon infallible: I made every
" allowance for the thoughtleſneſs of
" youth, his elevated rank, and his com-
" mand of fortune. I could have par-
" doned

" doned diſſipation, however painful to " me; but I can never overlook diſ- " honor. The charge againſt him is " too ſtrong, not to be well-grounded: " a ſad foreboding tells me, that he is " guilty even to the very extent of the " depoſition.

" Yet I will withhold my ſentence, " till thoroughly convinced of his de- " pravedneſs. If he has been injured, " my fortune ſhall be laviſhed to diſ- " cover and bring to juſtice the black " defamer: but if the weighty charge " prove true, theſe eyes ſhall never more " behold his hateful perſon. He ſhall " wander, loaded with the direſt curſe " that ever iſſued from the lips of an " exaſperated parent. Even on my " death-bed will I refuſe him admit- " tance; and my parting breath ſhall " irrevocably ſeal my former execra- " tions on his head.

" Then

"Then let him triumph in his new-"acquired title; let him glory in his "wickedneſs!"

Here the Marques pauſed: the riſing blood fluſhed his palid cheeks, and from his rolling eyes gleamed angry fire.

"Yet," reſumed he, "ſhall ſuch a "wretch lord it o'er the Lara race? "ſhall his baſe-born offspring aſſume "a title, originally atchieved by deeds "of valor, and for ages ſince preſerved "by courage and worth? The very "thought mads me!—No; let him "fall at once; let a noble Spaniſh "father emulate Roman virtue; let his "ſon's hateful life expiate the crime "committed againſt his honor."

The Marqueſa ſhuddered at theſe concluding words: the reſolute manner with which they were pronounced, and the

the look that accompanied them, ſtruck terror to her ſoul. She fixed her full gaze upon the features of her lord; they were ſtill clouded with the lowering gloom of paſſion.

"And can this be?" ſaid the Marqueſa mentally; "Sure my ſenſes but "deceive me! And is this a father? "Why ſhould the feelings of a female "parent be ſo much more acute than "thoſe of the male creation? for I feel "that were Rimualdo to be guilty of "the moſt glaring and atrocious deed, "this heart would ſtill own him; the "yearnings of my ſoul would, never- "theleſs, ſtamp him for my offspring; "and though I could not revile againſt "that juſt power which doomed him for "the crime, yet I ſhould never be led "to aſſume the taſk of judicature to "myſelf."

The Marquesa then addressed the the Marques aloud:

"Oh! let me not suppose, my lord, "that you would raise the murderous "steel against your child! I will "believe it an unguarded impulse of "the moment that prompted you to "conceive a thought so unnatural, so "derogatory to your nature. Were "the Condè now placed before you, "guilty to the full extent of the alleged "fault, you would shrink terror-struck "from the thought of immolation. "Yes, I am sure that all the father "would rush into your breast, and ren- "der your nerved arm powerless as the "infants: such is the mighty pre-emi- "nence of nature o'er the passions! "such the instinct of a parent towards "his offspring!"

These impressive words produced such a powerful effect on the Marques, that he

he continued for ſome time ſilent. At length, riſing from the ſeat, he paced the chamber awhile; then advanced to one of the lofty gothic caſements, which commanded a moſt luxuriant proſpect of the weſtern horizon.

The beamy orb of jocund day was on the wane, and ſoon plunged into the boſom of the green foam ſpangled deep. Its rays ſtill darted far into the heavens, forming a radiant ſemicircle, whoſe mid ſplendor becoming gradually leſs powerful, till its extremity terminated in a rich mellow golden hue. The reſt was one unclouded ſheet of dark blue etherious expanſe.

Soon the more powerful tints faded from the ſight, and the bright ſemicircular form ſhrunk its expanded bulk and ſlowly died away.

A rich blood-red glow then ſtained the cheek of evening, partly laced with ſaffron

ſaffron ſtreaks, mantling every ſublunary object with hue of richeſt purple. The gawdy gleam ſtruck full upon the figure of the Marques; in whoſe breaſt this glorious ſcene had excited the moſt unaccountable ſenſations.

The Marqueſa's words had in ſome meaſure checked his tumultuous paſſions, and the heavenly ſcene before him, ſtill tending to meliorate his feelings, at length infuſed into his ſoul the moſt exquiſite thrill of tenderneſs: an irreſiſtible impulſe agitated him, and the big tears imperceptibly dimmed his fixed eyes. The Marqueſa obſerved this conflict of his ſoul with tranſport unutterable: the ſparkling dew-drop of ſenſibility glazed her upreared eyes, and her partly-opened lips breathed the ſilent prayer of gratitude.

The Marques at length turned ſlowly from the caſement; through which the fainteſt

fainteſt ruby tinge was obſervable, lingering on the light grey diſtance. He advanced to the couch, and preſſed in ſilence the Marqueſa's hand within his own. This was the unutterable language of a ſoul o'ercome by ſenſibility's thrilling touch. The Marques for the firſt time experienced that godlike emotion, which he had ever contemned as an effeminate weakneſs.

Without having uttered a ſyllable, he relinquiſhed the hand of the Marqueſa, and with penſive ſtep retired from the chamber.

In the fulneſs of her ſoul, the overjoyed Marqueſa fervently offered a prayer to that incomprehenſive Being, from whom alone ſprang the conduct ſhe had ſo lately witneſſed with delight in her lord.

The Marques in the meantime retired to his ſtudy: he peruſed the fatal

ſatal letter o'er and o'er; and often ſeized the pen to indite a billet to the Condè, ſuitable to the occaſion. His dread emotions of pride gradually reſumed their empire, though not to ſuch a powerful degree as before, and he at length wrote as follows:

" *To the* CONDÈ DON RIMUALDO.

" I CANNOT greet you as heretofore " by the title of ſon; as the contents of " a packet now before me, if authentic, " have obliterated every future claim " on my affection, by proving you a " ſcandal to your name, a diſgrace to " your family, and loſt to every ſenſe " of honor and rectitude.

" By the lines now before me, I am " given to underſtand that the adopted

"friend of your boſom, the artful youth "Ceſario, has inveigled you into the "ſociety of an abandoned, fameleſs "proſtitute; whoſe wily arts have ſo "far operated on your feelings as to "prompt you to make her honorable "profeſſions of attachment. I would "not willingly give evidence to ſuch a "tale. I cannot conceive that the "lineal heir of my title and eſtate "ſhould ſo forget what is due to him-"ſelf and neglect the reiterated com-"mands of a parent. I ſhall, therefore, "wait with calmneſs your anſwer to "this: which will, I truſt, fully contra-"dict the diſgraceful recital; and, as I "am thoroughly convinced that you "will not dare be guilty of a falſehood, "I ſhall place firm reliance on your "bare contradiction of the charge, and "immediately purſue the moſt rigorous

"ſteps

"ſteps to puniſh the malicious defamer "of your honor.

"But if, contrary to all expectation "and the reliance I have on your pru-"dence,—if you have been led to forget "yourſelf for a moment, the only mea-"ſures you can adopt to compenſate for "your folly will be the immediate "baniſhment of your evil counſellor, "and an unremitting attendance on the "perſon of your gracious Sovereign: "this alone will tend to obliterate the "diſgraceful recollection from my "memory.

"If guilty, do no endeavour to ex-"tenuate your conduct; for the attempt "will prove fruitleſs, and only render "you more deſpicable in my opinion.

"But if you ſhould daringly purſue "a courſe ſo repugnant to my feelings,

" and ſo degrading to your nobility of " blood, never let my eyes be ſeared " with the hateful ſight of your perſon; " live the ſlave of your degenerate paſ- " ſions; and when the welcome tidings " of my death ſhall reach you, let the " vibration of my parting accents for " ever reſound in your ear; let my " dying curſe weigh heavy on your ſoul, " and doom you to the miſery you will " ſo juſtly merit.

" May you never be bleſt with the " ſmiles of a harmleſs infant; may no " babe ever greet you with its innocent " prattle: or ſhould a lineal heir ſpring " from the corrupt ſtock, may he poſ- " ſeſs every paſſion that is baleful in " nature; may his earlieſt years be " marked with frowardneſs, and may " his manhood diſplay a temper cruel, " malicious, revengeful, and luxurious:

" may

"may he reſemble thee, alſo, by proving "unnatural; and may you ſink to the "grave loaded with ſorrow, and con- "ſcious that your offspring will rejoice "in your deceaſe!"

Having concluded theſe lines, the Marques proceeded to the chamber of his lady, to whom he preſented the ſcroll; ſhe received it in trembling, and her eyes eagerly glanced upon the page, whoſe contents her ſickening ſoul dreaded to be made acquainted with. The concluſive words moſt forcibly ſtruck her: ſhe was on the point of cenſuring their harſhneſs, but prudence told her that if the Condè was indeed guilty, ſuch a threat would operate moſt forcibly on his ſuſceptible heart, inſpire him with a juſt ſenſe of his error, and tend to his immediate reformatjon.

Refolding therefore the packet, ſhe delivered it again to the Marques with an

an approving ſmile: he diſpatched the meſſenger that very night to Toledo who had given Ceſario ſuch uneaſineſs on account of the abſence of his friend Rimualdo.

## CHAP. V.

Haſte thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jeſt and youthful jollity;
Quips and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks, and wreathed ſmiles,
Sport, that wrinkled care derides,
And laughter holding both his ſides: MILTON.

With viſage formidably grim,
As rugged as a Saracen,
Or Turk of Mahomet's own kin;
His tawny beard was th' equal grace
Both of his wiſdom and his face:
In cut and dye ſo like a tile,
A ſudden view it would beguile. BUTLER.

THE Condè, overjoyed at the intelligence he had received from the traveller, moved ſwiftly along the path, which for ſome time wound through verdant paſturages and richly cultivated lands, that

that ſpread themſelves in ſlopes from the broad baſis of the Pico hills.

The temperament of Rimualdo's mind did not permit him to pay attention to the alternate ſcenes of grandeur and ſimplicity that preſented themſelves at every winding of the road. The increaſing radiance of the ſun threw an enlivening gleam on every object; the enamelled meadows were veined with gentle ſtreamlets, whoſe tranſlucent waters diſplayed their ſhallow pebbly channels; numerous herds of ſtately oxen grazed on the plains; ſome were ſtretched upon the gloſſy ſoil, and others drank the refreſhing waters of the brook, while the ſtill more innocent fleecy tribe peacefully cropped the tender herb. But ſoon theſe enlivening objects changed; for, after a turn of the avenue that wound along the baſe of the laſt

Pico ſteep, the Condè entered the barren valley of the Sierra de Tablada; the ſudden transformation of the ſcene did not eſcape his thoughtful attention; and, on gazing around, he no longer felt ſurpriſed at the traveller's deſcription of the drearineſs of the way.

A bulky maſs of cloud-topped eminences roſe in rugged forms on either ſide; no pleaſing verdure decked the frowning ſteeps; ſometimes a huge projecting ſandy maſs was ſeen, and ſometimes an uneven rocky precipice appeared, from whoſe tremendous height a rumbling ſheet of water daſhed down in frothy torrents, and mingled with the black fathomleſs pool beneath. Here the grey tufted ſurge appeared, and the prickly thiſtle diſplayed its inodorous flower; and there the dark coniferous fir and pines rear'd their proud ſpiral forms, and majeſtically waved their foli-

age in the ambient breeze. No longer did the motley herds enliven the ſcene, the ſoil of the valley was parched, and ſtrewed with huge maſſes of the overhanging rocks which had at times given way, and marked their track with deſolation.

As Rimualdo advanced, the burning mid-day heat gave full upon the hollow way through which the path-way wound; he ſoon experienced its potent effect, and checked his courſer's pace. The bright overhanging canopy was unſullied by a cloud, and all Nature was gaudily decked with the gold radiance of the luminous orb.

The Condè proceeded for ſome hours in his courſe, his eye gratified by no other view than that which the barren Tablada mountains preſented on every ſide. Neither did a ſingle individual appear

to enliven the gloomy grandeur of the ſcenery.

At length the imperial charioteer of day haſtened his car of blazing light toward green Neptune's occidental floodgate. The bright rays in ſtreamy tracks embroidered heaven's expanſive arch with a ſtill brighter gleam, though his powerful heat gradually decreaſed, and the ſighing winds began to aſſume their wonted freſhneſs. Now the ſun's impetuous courſers whirled the ſpheric maſs through the gay ſapphrine plain, and ſoon the fiery body ſunk behind the blue ſummits of the ſtupenduous ſteeps.

From the extremeſt longitude where earth and heaven ſeem to kiſs, evening then diſplayed her bluſhing mantle, levelling its purple beams far throughout the eaſt, ſtill anxious to protract the drear approach of night. It was at this

moment that the Condè firſt caught a glimpſe of Segovia's riſing ſpires, that faintly ſhot their thin ſhadowy forms into the realms of air: he continued awhile along the track whoſe direction had for ſome time bent from the valley, and now cut through a narrow paſs between the mountains; it terminated at length in two branching roads, the one apparently, conducting directly to Segovia, the other leading to a village at no conſiderable diſtance.

Rimualdo now pauſed, undetermined in the track he ſhould purſue; but as the monk Sebaſtiano ſeemed to have carefully avoided the public route, he ſoon imagined that he would not paſs a city ſo extenſive and populous as Segovia, and accordingly directed his courſe towards the village.

A purple canopy of light now flushed the cheek of the western heaven; the sun's track was still observable by narrow streams of glittering gold, that beautifully laced the blushing plain. But soon these gaudy colours vanished; for the grey filmy curtain gradually appeared. Its sober tint absorbed the dying glow, and vegetative Nature hung its head. Star-spangled night then stole in silence above the misty east, and evening's lustrous star, invariable in its course, sailed through the etherial realm, beside her crescent sister the chaste moon.

The Condè now entered the village, and alighted at the first posada where he was greeted by the host, a very squat, lusty, redfaced, personage. From his appearance, he seemed every way calculated for mirth; but that which contributed to heighten the singularity of his general aspect, was a solemn gravity

so

ſo very frequent among the Spaniards, which belied his natural temper, and ſpread a forced gloom over his features, that never failed to excite riſible emotions in the beholder. Notwithſtanding the penſive mood in which Rimualdo was involved, the ſight of his landlord produced on him the uſual effect; and the innkeeper, after a moſt reverend obeiſance, led the way to an apartment with a moſt deliberate ſtep, where, after a loud *hem*, he thus addreſſed the Condè:

"Senor Don, to ſerve a genteel hi-
"dalgo like unto yourſelf conſtitutes
"the pride of my life; I am glad that
"you are the favored of fortune."

The ſingularity of this addreſs, and the ſolemn geſticulation that accompanied it, greatly ſurpriſed Rimualdo, who, ſmiling replied:

" And prithee, friend, what ſhould " lead you to conjecture that I am one " of fortune's favoured minions?"

" Pardon me, Senor Hidalgo, it is " no ſuppoſition, for I have thorough " conviction on my ſide; the undeni- " able certainty of fortune's having con- " ducted you to the famed manſion of " your humble ſervant Iago Panzelos."

" To your houſe!" exclaimed the Condè in aſtoniſhment; " and how does " that prove me befriended by the blind " goddeſs?"

" Certainly, Senor, it is the beſt " poſada this place affords, and con- " ſequently you are in high favor with " the unſtable dame."

Rimualdo could no longer refrain, but burſt into laughter at the quaintneſs of his hoſt, who had ſo facetiouſly complimented his own dwelling; but his riſibility

risibility, far from discomposing the settled economy of Iago's features, rather added to the solemnity of his aspect, and he thus continued:

"The day has been sultry, Senor. "Heat, I have always remarked, is your "greatest incentive to thirst; and journeying, the sure promoter of a good "appetite. Thanks to Saint Pacom! "we have most excellent recipes for "both these necessities! we lack neither "fluids nor solids; having abundance "of wines and most delicious fare.— "What would your honor require for "supper?"

Having given such orders as he thought requisite, the Condè attempted to detain his host, who was retiring from the chamber, in order to question him concerning what travellers had passed that way.

"Excuse

" Excuſe me, Senor," replied the landlord drily; " buſineſs muſt be firſt " attended to; your honor's hunger " muſt be ſatiated, and I muſt live. " The orders once given in the kitchen, " I ſhall forthwith return to know your " further commands with me."

To oppoſe his humour the Condè plainly perceived would be fruitleſs; he therefore ſuffered him to retire without further inquiry.

On Iago's re-entrance into the chamber, Rimualdo began by fully deſcribing the perſons of Conſtanza and Sebaſtiano; and then deſired to know if ſuch travellers had not been obſerved to paſs the village.

The hoſt, after a pauſe, replied:

" Such perſons have been ſeen, Senor, " but not to paſs the village; being at " this preſent time ſojourners within it."

" Indeed!

"Indeed!" returned the Condè anxiously: "tell me, I intreat you, my "honest friend! where I may find "them; conduct me instantly to the "place of their secretion; for much, I "assure you, depends upon it. The "lovely Signora that accompanies the "traveller is a suffering innocent, and "the Cavaliero a most base villain!"

Iago, casting a look peculiarly arch at Rimualdo, replied:

"Why truly, Senor, the damsel (the "Signora I would say) is a most delicate "piece of suffering innocence; and as "for the Cavaliero, he is indeed of the "ruffian species! I could myself relate "many feats of this same hidalgo; but "according to the old stanza,—

"Wag not thy tongue
"'Gainst old nor yóung,
"Lest cudgel's weight
"Should crack thy pate.

"Methinks

" Methinks 'twere more prudent for me " to remain ſilent on the ſubject."

" The time may come," reſumed the Condè eagerly, " when theſe feats " of which you make mention may " require further inveſtigation; for the " preſent we muſt, however, wave that " part of the ſubject: therefore, " without more delay, acquaint me, " I beſeech you, with the villain's " retreat!"

" You have, perhaps, ſome weighty " cauſe to know the Cavaliero," replied the landlord ſignificantly.

" I have," anſwered Rimuàldo peeviſhly, at the ſame time riſing from his ſeat, and traverſing the chamber with emotion.

" Then you are the firſt perſon," ſaid Iago that ever ſought a ſecond in-" terview with him."

" I may

"I may ſeek it, and ſeemingly long "enough too," replied the Condè, kindling with rage, "ere my deſire will "be gratified."

"Why you would not ſurely, Senor, "diſturb the hidalgo to-night," replied the hoſt; "he has been much fatigued "with the day's travel, and ſome time "ſince retired to reſt with the fair "Signora his companion."

"With the Signora? Impoſſible!" exclaimed the Condè, half choaked with paſſion. "By heavens, 'tis falſe! no "angel was ever more imaculate than "the heavenly Conſtanza!"

Iago now bent his wondering gaze upon Rimualdo, and eyed his perſon awhile with a look of doubtful aſtoniſhment; after which he ſeriouſly remarked:

"Well,

"Well, love doth truly bewilder the
"senses—he is a most potent divinity!
"Senor! I sincerely condole with you
"on your misfortune: but women,
"poor souls! were fickle from the
"beginning! It is a slippery race!"

No longer able to contain his passion, the Condè advanced with intent to seize Iago by the collar, but the retrograde step of his host and a moment's recollection convinced him of the imprudence of such conduct. Striking the earth in an agony of rage, he for some time traversed the chamber with disorderly step; and at length addressed him.

"Provoking wretch! lead me in-
"stantly to the spot, or you shall repent
"this procrastination!"

"Well, moderate your passion, Senor
"Hidalgo, and I will forthwith comply,"
returned the landlord.

With

With this assurance, Rimualdo prepared to follow his host into the village; when Iago, turning, remarked—"There "is no occasion for either beaver or "mantle, Senor; as the Cavaliero and "his nymph both repose beneath my "roof."

"What! in this posada?"

"To be sure, Senor! Why my gen-"tleman knows too well the comforts "of life, to put up at any secondary "hotel, I assure you!"

These words were uttered in a consequential tone; after which Iago very leisurely took the light from off the table, and, followed by the Condè, quitted the apartment.

They advanced along the corridor; at the end of which, having gained a narrow flight of steps, Iago made a halt, and, delivering the lamp into Rimualdo's

aldo's hand, directed him to the apartment which was occupied by the travellers.

The thoughtless Condè, wholly actuated by his passions, rushed up the staircase, which directly led to the fatal chamber; and on gaining its entrance, thundered vehemently several times at the door. His rude efforts were soon answered by a voice from within, which demanded in a most menacing tone the cause of such boisterous disturbance.

"Ah! villain!" exclaimed the Condè, "have I then o'ertaken thy steps? Instantly open, and deliver the innocent "victim of thy cruelty; or force shall "straight accomplish my purpose!"

Rimualdo several times repeated the threat; which was only answered with reiterated peals of laughter. Exasperated, he at length applied his shoulder

to

to the pannel, and with one thruſt burſt open the oppoſing bolts, then, drawing his ſword, he advanced into the chamber.

But who can conceive his aſtoniſhment; when, inſtead of the monk Sebaſtiano, he beheld, ſitting up in the bed, a lank, red-haired Cavaliero; whoſe ſcarred viſage wore the deepeſt copper die; his ſtubby beard was of ſimilar complexion, and a pair of tremendous mouſtachios, twiſted in papers, touched the tip of either ear; one hand had juſt ſeized the pommel of a Toledo rapier, that hung beſide the bed; while the other graſped the handle of an old guitar; on which this bluff hero had been playing, to lull his dulcinea to reſt.

The damſel, whoſe perſon appeared remarkably luſty, and whoſe rotundity of face was naturally fluſhed with the deepeſt ſcarlet, on beholding the Condè's embarraſſment, again burſt into laughter: after

after which, ſpringing from the bed, ſhe dauntleſsly diſplayed a muſcular ſymmetry of ſhape that would not have diſgraced the famed gladiators of old. Her hero, following the example of his Amazonian partner, alſo quitted the rug, and advancing towards the Condè with long ſtrides, reſembled one of Æthiopia's ſons ſcrubbed half-clean: his ſtature was far above the common; and his ſwarthy fleſh hung in folds over his bones, which appeared of gigantic dimenſion.

Rimualdo obſerving the menacing aſpect of his adverſary, thought it moſt expedient to put himſelf upon his guard; but he had no ſooner oppoſed the ſteel to that of his powerful opponent, than the weapon was wrenched from his graſp, and he found himſelf at the mercy of this exaſperated Cavaliero; who, with a loud oath, demanded the cauſe

 of

of ſuch an unparalleled breach of the laws of hoſpitality.

The Condè began to explain himſelf, when the regards of the female, who did not ſeem altogether diſguſted at his appearance, alarmed her exaſperated companion; whoſe jealouſy being immediately rouſed, ruſhed upon Rimualdo, and would, in all probability, have moſt ſeverely chaſtiſed his raſhneſs, but for the interference of his powerful Senora and the arrival of the hoſt, whoſe united efforts, with difficulty, diſarmed him: and the Condè, after a moſt ſevere reprimand, was permitted to leave the chamber without further moleſtation.

Perfectly aſhamed of himſelf, Rimualdo deſcended to his apartment, venting his ſpleen on Iago's head for having led him into ſuch an error, and

con-

condemning the rashness of his own conduct.

In the midst of these ruminations the landlord entered; who, after having silently listened to the Condè's invectives for some time, at length, by his own desire, gave the following brief account of the hero, from whose clutches he had so luckily escaped.

"The Cavaliero, Senor, is by birth "a Catalonian; who, having been "guilty in early life of some disgraceful "actions, fled his paternal residence and "friends, and entered the service as "a private soldier; in which situation "he gained hard blows in plenty, as his "face and body will testify to the pre- "sent day. Deserting his regiment, he "for some time lived on plundering the "unwary: after which, travelling to "Madrid, he practised in the ring at the "bull-fights, and, by his prowess and

" gigantic ſtrength gained numerous
" prizes; but being naturally addicted
" to diſſipation, the ſums thus earned
" were ſoon ſquandered among his diſ-
" ſolute companions. An unlucky
" blow having for ſome time diſabled
" him from continuing that exerciſe, he
" then enliſted himſelf one of the gang
" of bravos in that city; but he was
" ſoon compelled to take flight, it being
" ſuppoſed that he was the principal
" in aſſaſſinating the only ſon of a gran-
" dee, who was one night found mur-
" dered near the Prado. The Senor
" then turned mule-driver; and by his
" exceſſive ſtrength and overbearing
" manners has attained to the exalted
" poſt of captain of the numerous bands
" of muleteers that frequent this part
" of the country. He always puts up
" at the beſt inns, while his inferiors
" repoſe with their own beaſts in the
" ſtables. His fame is ſo well-known

"that no one dares conteſt his will: he "is a very devil too among the ſofter "ſex, Senor!" continued Iago face- tiouſly; "nor deigns to travel without "a female help-mate!"

After ſuch a deſcription, Rimualdo conceived it moſt prudent to decamp as ſoon as poſſible, leſt the wrath of this terrific Don ſhould rekindle againſt him. Having therefore partook of the repaſt which was now ſerved up, the Condè ordered his horſe; and that very night ſet out from the village, purſuing the unfrequented route which led in a contrary direction to Segovia.

As the Condè advanced, a thouſand ideas ruſhed impetuouſly on his brain; and notwithſtanding all his endeavours, an unuſual ſadneſs took poſſeſſion of his ſoul. In vain did he call the beauties of Conſtanza to his remembrance; in vain did he recur to her words and man-

manners, which convinced him that he was the well-beloved.

These thoughts afforded but a momentary sensation of joy; which had no sooner subsided, than his depression became more insupportable.

He brought to his mind the numerous eventful circumstances which arise to checker the transient period of man's existence; and then compared every scene that had occurred during the short term which was elapsed since his departure from the kingdom of Navarre.

Every fresh scene that memory presented to his fancy led him to arraign the will of Providence.

" Ah! wherefore," exclaimed the Condè mentally, " should Fate delight " to torture the weak minds of insignificant mortals? Why was it ordained " that

" that I ſhould quit my paternal roof? " Why was I expoſed to the buffets of " a rude and mercileſs world, when I " might have ſpent my days in an un- " interrupted ſtate of felicity, with the " much loved authors of my exiſtence? " Why was I reſcued from the robber's " murderous dagger, which would have " terminated at once every future ſuffer- " ing? Why am I become the favored " of a Monarch, ſince his prepoſſeſſion " will only expoſe me to hatred and to " envy? and above all, why did my " eyes reflect an object to my heart " which has ruined my peace for ever? " Yes; already have I infringed a pa- " rent's command; and by a haſty vow " renounced the world, unleſs Con- " ſtanza ſhould ſhare the joys of life " with me. Already is the Marques " my father, perhaps, acquainted with " my undutiful conduct. I even think " that I now behold the figure of my

"fond mother: her tears and supplica- "tions, vainly offered in my behalf, "seem to vibrate in my ear; yes, all "will not tend to meliorate my father's "rigorous temper: no, he lavishes "curses on his undutiful offspring: "perhaps, at this very instant he re- "clines sleepless on his pillow, pro- "nouncing the fatal execration on my "head: perhaps the Marquesa on her "knees, bathes his hand with tears, "and, in the bitterness of anguish, calls "on death to terminate at once her "wretched existence; and 'tis myself "who am alone the cause of all these "sufferings,—the reflection is insup- "portable!"

Rimualdo paused awhile; then placed his hand upon his forehead in an agony of thought, and continued for some time a prey to the keenest emotions that ever rent the bosom of an affectionate, yet erring son.

"And

"And muſt I then never again appear in their ſight! muſt my eyes be never more gladdened with their loved preſence! Yes, I will preſent myſelf before them! I will liſten in ſilence to the voice of anger which ſhall reprobate my conduct: each curſe ſhall be returned with a bleſſing from my lips! I will ſeize that hand which would oppoſe my approach, and bathe it with my contrite tears! I will graſp my father's garments! I will kiſs his feet! he ſhall not ſpurn me from him! The Marqueſa my mother too will intercede in my behalf: he will not ſurely then remain obdurate, but melt and forgive his erring offspring! For though the Marques is apparently ſtern, it proceeds from no callouſneſs of the heart, but has its ſource in pride. He is naturally endowed with every gentle qualification that elevates the character of man: the tender

" fibres of his soul once touched, 'tis " then the dormant faculties of his " breast will be brought to light: all " emotions arising from family pride " will shrink from sensibility's all-con- " quering pressure, and feeling nature " will soon predominate!

" Yet, how have I acted in contra- " diction to a father's command? Con- " stanza will be found worthy of my " family: yes! she will prove of noble " lineage. From the first moment " my eyes gazed on her ravishing fea- " tures, I felt an internal conviction " that she was of superior birth; and I " still cherish the same idea with un- " abating fervor.—Oh! then what un- " utterable transport will it be to pre- " sent her as the ornament of our " house! to have her regarded as the " child of rectitude! the touching off- " spring of suffering nobility!

" Yes,

"Yes, my honored father! I ſhall "accompliſh thy will! I ſhall raiſe a "perſecuted family from oblivion, and "heap freſh honors on the race of "Lara! Then ſhall my parents learn "that the dazzle of wealth never "tempted their ſon; that he was ena- "moured of innocence, beauty, honor, "and unſullied virtue."

This train of fond ideas had ſo much abſorbed Rimualdo's brain, that he travelled unconſcious of every object around him. The road was narrow, and almoſt impaſſable in places. A little to the left, a waving foreſt met the eye; while on the oppoſite ſide the tract was banked with a lofty ridge of frowning rocks.

He continued ſo loſt in thought as not to obſerve that ſable night's gemmy cheek became gradually ſcarfed with

 lower-

lowering ſheets of clouds, which ſlowly ſpread their pitchy forms throughout the expanſive atmoſphere: the wind progreſſively increaſed its howl, and agitated the ruſtling trees of the lofty wood; it alſo moaned from the gaping caverns of the overhanging precipices, producing a conſtant melancholy ſound.

At length the ſwollen clouds, no longer capable of containing their watery burden, began to diſtil themſelves in large drops, which increaſed momentally.

Rimualdo ſoon felt the pelting of the ſtorm: he gazed around, but could perceive no place of ſhelter; a dun gloom mantled every object from the ſight; and nought was heard but the confuſed din of roaring winds, ſpouting torrents, and the waving of the leafy foreſt.

He

He ſpurred his ſteed, and advanced more ſwiftly along the path, continuing in the ſame pace for a length of time; when the remote clatter of horſes hoofs ſuddenly arreſted his attention. Still he urged his courſer, which advanced with increaſing rapidity; and the ſound ſeemed to become every inſtant more diſtinct.

The Condè was now in expectation that he ſhould overtake the traveller; but his hopes were preſently damped; for the noiſe ceaſed, and nothing ſtruck upon his ear but the continued ſound of the raging elements.

Purſuing his courſe for a length of time, he beheld, on a ſudden, at a conſiderable diſtance, the faint glimmer of a light. As he puſhed forward, the ray ſeemed to brighten; and he did not doubt that he ſhould ſoon arrive at a place

place of ſhelter: but again his fond wiſhes were fruſtrated, for the gleam diſappeared. Rimualdo, ſtill keeping his eye fixed in that direction, guided his horſe towards the ſpot; but his ſearch was for awhile fruitleſs; and full an hour elapſed ere he gained the wiſhed-for manſion.

It was a ſpacious thatched cottage; in front of which roſe a barren hill, and behind, the tufted wood reared its verdure-clad branches.

The Condè gained the door, and, alighting, knocked ſtoutly for admittance, but no one anſwered the ſummons; he repeated the ſtroke ſeveral times, when a light at length appeared through the upper caſements; and the portal ſoon opening, Rimualdo beheld an old woman, of whom he immediately begged ſhelter from the inclemency of the night.

The

The dame eyed the Condè awhile; after which, directing him to a ſmall ſhed, ſhe told him, "that he would "there find a ſtall, whereto he might "attach his horſe; and ſhe would then "admit him into the houſe."

As Rimualdo led his ſteed to the ſpot, the recollection of the adventure in the foreſt recurred ſtrongly to his mind; he alſo remembered the ſound of horſes, which had ſome time before ſtruck his ear, and began to waver in his determination of ſheltering himſelf in the cottage; but ſoon conquering theſe obtruding fears, he returned boldly to the entrance of the lowly habitation, where the old woman attended to receive him. The Condè followed her ſteps into a lower chamber; round which he caſt a cautious glance, but nothing appeared to excite miſtruſt.

His

His hoſteſs deſiring that he would be ſeated, prepared to relight the wood fire. A few dying embers ſtill lay ſcattered on the hearth, upon which ſhe threw ſome dry chips, which ſoon began to crackle and caſt a cheerful gleam around the chamber.

Rimualdo having laviſhed abundant thanks on the old dame, inquired if many ſtrangers travelled that road.

"Indeed, Senor, days and weeks paſs "away without my ſeeing a ſtrange "countenance. I verily believe that this "is one of the moſt retired and melan-"choly ſpots in the whole kingdom of "Old Caſtille."

"Have you of late beheld any tra-"vellers?" inquired the Condè.

The woman looking ſtedfaſtly on his features, replied with ſome degree of trepidation:

"No,

" No, none, Senor! I am ſure that " for theſe three days paſt no living " ſoul, except yourſelf, has come within " ſight of my habitation."

" I ſuppoſe that you have no ſpare " chamber for my accommodation " during the night?" continued Rimualdo: " I would handſomely reward any " trouble you ſhould be put to on my " account, could you by any means " make it convenient; for I have journeyed far, and my habiliments are " thoroughly drenched with the rain that " has fallen in ſuch abundance."

The old dame, after a pauſe, replied:

" Why no, Senor, there is but my " own apartment which you would " chooſe to repoſe in; to be ſure the " very beſt room in the cottage is never " inhabited; nor would I, indeed, ſubject my greateſt enemy to ſuch a

" restless night's repose as he would
" undergo in that chamber."

" Is there anything to fear then?" said the Condè; " or what is it that " inspires such dread as your conversa- " tion would lead me to conjecture?"

" Why, if you would not think the " relation over tedious, Senor, I will " give the detail of every circumstance " just as it occurred."

The Condè being somewhat interested by the words of his hostess, begged that she would proceed.

" It is now some seventeen years and " upwards since the circumstance took " place. The night I recollect was " dreadfully tempestuous: I had retired " to rest full an hour, when a loud " knocking at the gate awakened me; " I hurried on my clothes with preci- " pitation, and, descending, inquired

" who

" who the ſtrangers were, and their " buſineſs at the cottage. Being anſwered by a male perſon, I was fear- " ful of giving admittance to a man at " ſuch a drear hour; and prepared to " re-mount the ſtair-caſe, when my " ears were aſſailed by the tremulous " ſounds of a female voice, that ſuppli- " cated for admiſſion in the moſt win- " ning accents. I could not refuſe a " ſhelter to the diſtreſſed Senora! ſo " immediately unbolting the door I " admitted the travellers; who conſiſted " of a youthful lacquey, a female attend- " ant, and one of the moſt lovely ladies " my eyes ever beheld. She was " mounted on a horſe, before the male " ſervant, while the woman rode on " another. The Senora's attire was " rich; and ſhe appeared every way the " woman of conſequence: I likewiſe " perceived that ſhe was far advanced in " pregnancy.

" The Senora had ſcarcely alighted " when ſhe complained of illneſs, and " aſſiſted by her attendant, we ſoon un- " dreſſed and placed her in my bed. " I then deſcended, and made a large " fire in this very chamber, before " which her male domeſtic ſeated him- " ſelf—in that very chair which you now " occupy, Senor. I tendered him all " the refreſhment my cottage afforded, " but he continually rejected my offer; " his cheek reclined upon his hand, his " eyes, from which the big tears rolled " plenteouſly, were bent full upon the " blazing fuel, and heaving ſighs iſſued " frequently from his boſom. I inter- " rogated him on the cauſe of his ſor- " row, but he merely ſtretched forth his " hand, then placed it on his left ſide " juſt upon his heart, and mournfully " waved his head. After awhile the " female domeſtic above called me to " her aſſiſtance; I flew to the chamber

" where

"where I found, to my aſtoniſhment, "the beautiful Senora in the pangs of "child-birth; and by dawn the following day a lovely male infant was "brought into the world. Every aſſiſtance that I could render in ſuch a "perdicament was freely tendered; "and at the expiration of three weeks "the lady was pretty well recovered, "which was a matter of aſtoniſhment "to me, for a ſadneſs ſeemed continually "to weigh on her ſoul; and while gazing on the ſleeping babe, that conſtantly lay beſide her, I often ſaw her "eyes brim-full with tears: her ſervants "were not leſs ſuſceptible of their "miſtreſs's ſorrow, attending her with "unremitting ſolicitude, and betraying "by their manners that they were no "ſtrangers to the ſource of her grief. "Although I frequently queſtioned "them, I never could obtain any ſatiſfactory account of the Senora; and

"they

" they took their departure from the " cottage, after profusely rewarding me " for my attention, and strictly enjoin- " ing me, as I felt for another's suffer- " ings, not to reveal the affair for a " stated period; nor have my lips ever " divulged the secret, but to one inha- " bitant of the next village and your- " self. Now, Senor, the chamber of " which I first spoke, is the very apart- " ment wherein the Senora reposed. " After her departure I attempted to " sleep in it as usual, but horrid dreams " always affrighted me; strange noises " too were heard, and I verily believe " that evil spirits have haunted the " room from that very period. I have " a niece who is now absent, and has " witnessed the same unaccountable " events; and it is for that reason, " Senor, I would not wish to subject " you to the like unpleasant circum- " stances."

Rimualdo, ſmiling, demanded of his hoſteſs if ſhe had not firſt made the cauſe of her fear known to her relative ere ſhe had alſo become conſcious of theſe dreadful appearances.

" Why, yes, Senor hidalgo; I told " her every circumſtance, and then " deſired that ſhe would ſleep in the " apartment, either to verify or con- " tradict my fears; but the night was " not half elapſed ere ſhe came breath- " leſs to my chamber, with the moſt " terrific tale I ever heard: if it ſo " pleaſe you, Senor hidalgo, I will ac- " quaint you with all that paſſed."

The Condè thanked her for the offer, but begged to be excuſed; adding, at the ſame time, that he ſhould eſteem it a moſt particular favor, would ſhe permit him to reſt that night in the very chamber; and with a ſmile ſaid, that he

he ſhould like either to *verify* or *contradict* her niece's aſſertion.

The old dame uſed all her rhetoric to diſſuade him; but Rimualdo ſtill perſiſting in his wiſh, ſhe firſt ſpread ſome refreſhment on the board, of which he partook, and then aſcended the ſtaircaſe, accompanied by the Condè. After placing freſh linen on the bed, ſhe bade her gueſt a quiet repoſe; placed the lamp upon the table, and muttering a prayer to Santa Catharina, hurried from the chamber trembling at every joint.

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

*Printed by A. Strahan, Printers-Street, London.*